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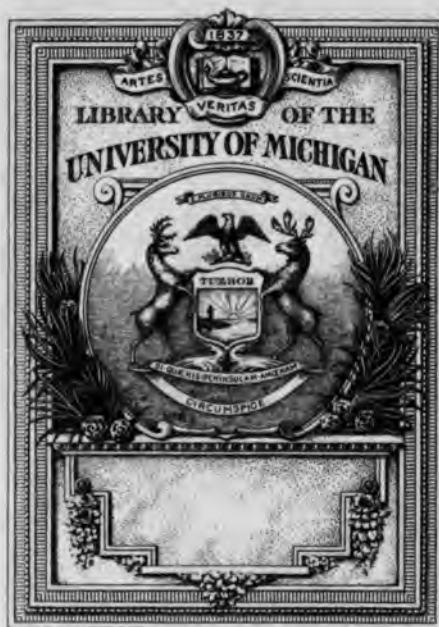
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**THE CAMPAIGN
OF TRAFALGAR
VOLUME II.**



THE CAMPAIGN OF TRAFALGAR

BY
JULIAN S. CORBETT, LL.M. 1854-

IN TWO VOLUMES
VOL. II

WITH CHARTS AND DIAGRAMS

NEW EDITION

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON

FOURTH AVENUE & 30TH STREET, NEW YORK

BOMBAY, CALCUTTA, AND MADRAS

1919

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Printed in the United States

Hist.-European
 Southern
 7-25-24
 10408

CONTENTS OF THE SECOND VOLUME

CHAP.	PAGE
XVI. GENERAL SITUATION AT THE CRISIS	251
XVII. THE MASTERSTROKE	265
XVIII. THE SOLUTION OF THE CRISIS	283
XIX. THE RETURN TO THE OFFENSIVE	302
XX. SECURING THE COMMUNICATIONS	330
XXI. THE DEADLOCK AT CADIZ	352
XXII. THE MAIN FLEETS IN CONTACT	370
XXIII. NELSON'S PLAN OF ATTACK	380
XXIV. THE BATTLE OF TRAFALGAR	399
XXV. END OF THE NAVAL CAMPAIGN	440
XXVI. CONCLUSION	452

APPENDICES

A. PITT'S INSTRUCTIONS TO LORD G. LEVESON-GOWER	473
B. FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS TO LORD G. LEVESON-GOWER	486
C. THE TRAFALGAR SIGNAL, 1816	493
D. LORD NELSON'S MEMORANDUM	496
E. LISTS AND PLANS SHOWING THE MANNER OF ENGAGING AT TRAFALGAR	500
F. SCHEDULES OF SIGNALS RECORDED AT TRAFALGAR	506
INDEX	525

CHARTS AND DIAGRAMS

6. Chart showing operations from August 10th to 30th.
Calder's retreat to Ushant and return in pursuit of
Villeneuve. Villeneuve's sortie from Ferrol and
retreat to Cadiz, with cruiser movements *To face p. 282*
Villeneuve's approximate course is plotted from Reille's
Journal and the reports of British cruising ships.

7. Chart to illustrate the operations to intercept Alle-
mand, with course of Baird's expedition from the
end of August to the middle of October " 336

8. Plan of Trafalgar attached to the Report of Captain
Prigny, Villeneuve's Chief-of-the-Staff " 400
Reduced from the plan given by Desbrière, *Trafalgar*,
Documents Annexes, p. 142, from the original in *Ar-*
chives de la Marine, BB¹, 237.

9. Diagram to illustrate the intention of Collingwood's
signal for the Larboard line of bearing *Page* 409

10. Diagram to show how the Allied Line became convex. . *Page* 418

11. The Attack at Trafalgar. Position of the combined
Forces of France and Spain at the commencement
of the action, 21st Oct., 1805 *To face p. 426*
From Craig's Plan. See p. 500, No. 4.

12. Sir Richard Strachan's action, November 4th. . . . " 446
Reduced from the plan attached to the Report of Rear-
Admiral Dumanoir le Pelley as given by Desbrière,
Trafalgar, *Documents Annexes*, p. 308, from the
original in *Archives de la Marine*, BB¹, 237.

13. Diagram of the Trafalgar signal *Page* 493
From the *Signal Book* of 1816.

CHAPTER XVI

GENERAL SITUATION AT THE CRISIS

THE turning-point of the campaign was at hand, but the hour was big with far more than the crisis of a campaign. A hundred years of rivalry for the lordship of the sea was drawing to culmination, and the protagonists, as in some old drama of destiny, were fairly face to face upon the imposing stage. On the cliffs of Boulogne, at the zenith of his powers, was the greatest master of war the long struggle had produced, alert and straining for the catastrophe amidst the sound and pomp of the Grand Army. Over against him, unknown to fame and bent with his eighty years, a sailor sat alone in the silence of his room at Whitehall. Unseen and almost unnoticed he was gathering in his fingers the threads of the tradition which the recurring wars had spun, and handling them with a deft mastery to which the distant fleets gave sensitive response. The splendour of quick success and an unrivalled genius for war was arrayed against hard-won experience and the instinct it had bred, and it was arrayed in vain.

Ever since Napoleon had realised with reluctant conviction that to pass his army across the Channel by stealth or its own force was impossible, he had been exhausting his strategical ingenuity to secure the temporary command. He had run the gamut of every device his predecessors had ever tried. No trick or compelling movement had been neglected to dissipate the force that barred his way,

to entice the persistent guard from its impregnable position, or by surprise to fling upon it an overwhelming mass of his own strength. For seven crowded months he had schemed and striven with the utmost power of his genius and with nearly the whole seaboard of Europe at his call; and yet when the hour came his squadrons were still impotently divided; and far from clearing the way for their union, his efforts were only drawing together at the old strategical centre practically the whole available battle strength of his enemy.

For Barham and Cornwallis it had been a time of acute anxiety. The *mise en scène* which Napoleon had directed Marmont to arrange in the Texel—his latest device to loosen the British grip of the Channel—had had its effect. Since the second week in July intelligence reports had been coming in from Holland of a sudden activity in the Helder. All transports had been moved out to the Texel Roads, three ships of the line ordered thence to Flushing had been told to stand fast, seven of the line and four frigates were ready for sea, and ammunition was pouring in along the roads from Amsterdam. Our agent was not deceived. Every one believed it meant a genuine movement, "but I," he said, "am enabled to tell you the *truth*. The plan is now for certain to risk a stroke on Ireland, and all that is done on our [that is, the Dutch] coast has no other object than to mislead the enemy." A few days later, however, came more emphatic information of Marmont's activity, and the Government felt they could no longer leave things as they were.¹ Then, as always, the threat of troops and ships in action together could not be ignored. They suggested naturally that Napoleon was contemplating getting a squadron into the Texel north-about, and as according to the First Lord's calculation, the Ushant

¹ Intelligence from Holland, July 10th, 13th, and 18th: *Admiralty In-letters (Secretary of State)*, 4199.

squadron had then twenty-five of the line, it was decided to reinforce Lord Keith in the Downs, and Cornwallis was ordered to send him three seventy-fours.¹ Keith's own attitude was one of resolute incredulity, but he told the Government, if they attached any importance to the news, he advised that Admiral Russell, who under his orders was watching the Dutch coast from Yarmouth, ought to be directed never to leave the Texel. He would reinforce him as soon as possible and keep a frigate at hand, so that he himself could take command if anything happened. Meanwhile he had ordered Admiral Vashon, who from Leith was controlling the northern section of his command, to warn his cruisers on the Norwegian coast to be specially vigilant.²

The anxiety of the Government, however, increased. Four days later information came in from Lord Strangford, our *chargé-d'affaires* at Lisbon, that Villeneuve's instructions were certainly to return north-about and release Marmont's force in the Texel.³ It was intelligence which, as we know, was not entirely without foundation. The idea was actually one of the alternatives with which Napoleon's brain was teeming. Strangford had received the information direct from Paris; the *Curieux's* report of Villeneuve's course endorsed it, and the danger became more serious. That very day the Admiralty issued an order to Cornwallis that he must send three more of the line to Lord Keith "with all possible despatch," and at the same time Rear-Admiral Drury, who was still in command of the Irish station, was directed to keep a vigilant watch for "any part of the enemy's squadron," and if anything appeared to send word

¹ Minutes of July 22nd: *Barham Papers*. The ships detailed in the order were *Defence*, *Goliath*, and *Zealous*, temporarily attached to Cornwallis on the *Curieux's* arrival. Cf. p. 199.

² Keith to the Admiralty, July 22nd: *In-letters*, 551. Keith at this time had his flag in the block ship *St. Albans* off Ramsgate.

³ *Admiralty In-letters (Secretary of State)*, 4199. Received July 26th.

by fast sailing vessels to Ushant, to the Admiralty, and to Nelson at Lagos.¹

Lord Keith was still sceptical. On receipt of Strangford's information he replied that he attached little credit to it, but in deference to the Government's view he had repeated his orders to Vashon, and had instructed Russell that in case of need he was to fall back to the Downs.²

Barham's attitude to the flotilla theatre of operations is well shown by an interesting episode which occurred just at this time, and which marks the sharp distinction he drew between the defensive and the offensive parts of the plan of campaign. The young captains of the advanced cruisers were seizing every opportunity of striking at the belated sections of the French flotilla as they passed to the ports of concentration, and even at the Boulogne units when divisions came out for practice. On July 17th and 18th a more than usually serious affair of this kind had occurred, as Admiral Ver Huell was passing a strong section from Dunkirk to Boulogne. The attack had been pushed home with

¹ Marsden to Cornwallis (two despatches), July 26th: *Barham Papers*. At this time also Hawkesbury from the Home Office was pressing the Admiralty for lieutenants to take charge of a chain of signal stations that was being established on the Irish coasts, and the Admiralty had difficulty in meeting the demand. The stations extended from Pigeon House (Dublin) to Bunmahon in Waterford, clustering closely round the south-east corner of the island. Beyond Cork they began again at Toe Head, and continued by Cape Clear and the Great Blasket as far as Brandon Head in Kerry. Thence, at wider intervals, they stretched by Galway Bay to Malin's Head in the extreme north. A list of them—twenty-seven in number—is in *Admiralty In-letters (Secretary of State)*, 4200, August 5th.

² Keith to the Admiralty, July 28th: *In-letters*, 551. Keith had under his command at this time six flag-officers: Vashon, on the Leith station; "Billy" Douglas, in the *Leopard* 50, watching the Boulogne section; Russell, with the Yarmouth-Texel division; Sir Sidney Smith, off Flushing; Holloway, in the Downs, for the Ostend-Calais section; and Rowley, at the Nore for the Thames. The Admiralty, however, kept a very direct control of the distribution of the ships and the general strategy. Keith habitually submits his proposed instructions for his flag-officers to the Admiralty, and sometimes seems to request that direct orders in accordance with them should be sent to the flag-officer concerned, if the Admiralty approved his suggestion. *In-letters*, 551-2, July 22nd; August 15th, *et passim*.

so much energy and daring that considerable damage was inflicted on Ver Huell's vessels; but the movement was not stopped, and the British cruisers engaged had suffered somewhat severely from the shore batteries. Keith reported the incident, with commendation of the brilliant behaviour of the officers concerned. But it was all quite contrary to Barham's ideas, and while fully recognising the courage and devotion of the attempt, he informed Keith that this kind of operation was not in accordance with sound strategy. He was to understand that it must not occur again. On no account were attacks to be made on the flotilla under the shore batteries by the cruisers of his command. "It may be," he said, "the means of losing them when they may be required for more material service." In other words, in the defensive area of the British plan, the forces were to remain on the defensive, and on no account to attack except when a clearly favourable opportunity for a counter-stroke presented itself.¹

The main function of Cornwallis was, of course, to cover the defensive position of Lord Keith, and to prevent a hostile battle fleet from disturbing it. So impregnable indeed was Keith's position, so long as it was undisturbed from the ocean, that that of Cornwallis was the real key of the situation. For this reason he had been told, it will be remembered, that all orders for detachments were to be regarded by him as conditional on his keeping eighteen of the line with his flag. The second order to send three vessels to Keith was consequently difficult to deal with. He received it on August 4th, just after he had heard from Calder that Villeneuve had disappeared after the action, and that he had resumed the blockade of Ferrol and sent Stirling back to Rochefort. So far all was well, but he had

¹ *Secret Orders: Out-letters*, July 21st. For the operations in question see James, iii. 318-323; Desbrière, iv. 418-425; Keith to the Admiralty, July 18th-23rd, with enclosures: *In-letters*, 551.

now only just eighteen of the line with his flag; the detachment would reduce the squadron below the prescribed minimum. Nevertheless, Cornwallis obeyed and sent away his three weakest ships, which were also those best suited to the service on the Dutch coast.¹ But the dangerous weakness to which the central position had thus been reduced was quickly emphasised. On July 30th the Admiralty received Calder's report of his indecisive action, with his opinion that Villeneuve would probably get into Ferrol, and that he himself would have to close on Cornwallis. The three seventy-fours were immediately ordered to return to Cornwallis's flag.² Barham was clearly of opinion that a rapid concentration of every available ship off Ushant was the simple and only solution of the disturbed situation. The closing in of the Western Squadron was already provided for, and on August 3rd an order was sent down to Nelson to come up and join it, after detaching whatever he regarded as necessary to enable Collingwood to maintain the blockade of Cadiz.³

The broad strategical principles underlying these dispositions, and Barham's fundamental views as to the functions of the Western Squadron in the war-plan, are clearly indicated in a memorandum which he sent at this time to Cornwallis. It will be seen that his duties were far from being merely defensive. Subject to the primary exigencies of defence in home waters, his fleet was the active centre

¹ *Princess of Orange* 74 (formerly the *Washington*), a Dutch prize; *Ruby* 64, *Polyphemus* 64. Cornwallis to Marsden, August 4th: *Blockade of Brest*, ii. 330.

² Minute of July 30th: *Barham Papers: Admiralty Minutes* 153, July 31st.

³ *Admiralty Secretary (Secret Orders)*, 1363. Shortly afterwards sealed orders, the purport of which is unknown, were sent by Cornwallis to Stirling and Calder, but they never reached them. Some confusion occurred over the reinforcement of Keith. *Goliath* and *Defence* reached the Downs on July 30th, the day Barham ordered them back. On August 6th the other three vessels had arrived, and Keith acknowledged an order to send them back. This was cancelled next day by telegraph, and the ships were sent to Russell off the Texel, with whom they remained. *In-letters*, 551, July 23rd, 30th. *Ibid.*, 552, August 6th, 7th, 8th.

from which minor counter attacks were to be flung off as opportunity or need arose. "I had wrote you," the memorandum runs, "a private instruction, when we first heard of the Rochefort squadron being at sea, to send four ships of the line to intercept them, but the alarm from the eastward obliged us to send those ships to Lord Keith, which would otherwise have come to you." . . .

"It is truly mortifying not to be able to seize such opportunities when they offer, and it will be my study to keep your fleet as strong in numbers as possible, so as to allow you to detach squadrons for annoying the enemy, as often as you hear of them being in your neighbourhood without waiting for orders from home."

"As the Western Squadron is the mainspring from which all offensive operations must proceed, it shall be my care to keep it as strong and effective as possible."

"The enemy to the eastward are active in appearance, but as many things must concur to bring such an armament to sea, they cannot attack us unobserved."

"I hope you have an opportunity of communicating frequently with Sir John Saumarez, so that information of an attack to the eastward may be as early as possible, in case your assistance should become necessary."¹

Lord Barham therefore, it is clear, while holding resolutely to the main defensive position, was alert to strike in any direction the moment the tortoise should show its head. As for Pitt, just as little as the old First Lord had he suffered the preoccupation with home defence to loosen his grip on the main offensive intention of his policy. And this is a point of the highest importance, if we are to judge rightly the masterstroke by which the situation was eventually solved. Whatever Napoleon might think, he had

¹ Barham to Cornwallis, Aug. 15th: *Hist. MSS. Com., Various Collections*, vi. p. 411.

failed to wrest the initiative from Pitt's hands. The Treaty of Coalition, it is true, had not yet been ratified by the Czar, but during the last week of July news reached the Government from St. Petersburg which pointed to a speedy conclusion of the whole matter. The Czar's idea of the Coalition, it will be remembered, was to use it as an armed mediation for forcing Napoleon to abandon his intolerable policy of aggrandisement, and to assent to a general settlement of Europe on terms acceptable to England and the other Powers. We have seen how the terms demanded by England in regard to her position in the Mediterranean were not approved by the Czar. The last despatches from Gower, received on July 3rd, had announced that Austria was equally irreconcilable on the point, and that although she was mobilising her army she was not to be trusted. Russia, however, might possibly act alone, and the Ambassador had been given to understand she was going to bring her force in Corfu up to 25,000 men. General Lacy had actually reached Naples, and he seemed ready to co-operate with Craig in South Italy. Moreover, although the Czar would not ratify the treaty, he was already acting on it. He had arranged with Pitt that a Russian envoy charged with the mediation should represent both countries. The man chosen for the mission was Novosilzow, one of the Czar's most confidential servants, and he was on the point of starting for Paris. On his way he was to stay at Berlin and endeavour to press the halting Prussian Government into line.¹ The news which now came to hand was that Napoleon's defiant annexation of Northern Italy had exhausted the Czar's patience. "Such an act," wrote Gower, "at the very moment when a Russian plenipotentiary was expected in France charged with propositions of which the professed object had been

¹ Gower to Mulgrave, June 10th: *Foreign Office, Russia*, 58. Endorsed, "Received July 3rd." Printed in Holland Rose: *Third Coalition*, p. 174.

the general arrangement of the affairs of Europe, is considered so gross an insult to both Sovereigns whose sentiments that plenipotentiary was empowered to declare, that his Imperial Majesty had judged he could not . . . permit Monsieur Novosilzow to proceed." An express consequently had been sent to recall him.

So far all was well, but Gower had to report that feeling at the Russian Court was almost equally sore at Pitt's insistence on the retention of Malta, and his categorical refusal even to consider a modification of the Maritime Code. To Gower's explanations and arguments they had responded by reproaching him with the fact that no answer had been received from London to the proposition the Czar had made for an extended plan of operations and an increase of the British subsidy in return for an increase of the Russian troops. Fortunately at the moment a despatch arrived from London frankly accepting the new proposals, and the sky began to clear. Gower said he had not been able actually to secure the ratification, but that he had no doubt he would be able to announce it in his next despatch.¹

At the same time Worontzow, at the Russian embassy in London, received information from Novosilzow at Berlin that Austria was coming round. She was beginning to realise, he said, that force was the only remedy, and though apparently acquiescing in Napoleon's seizure of the Iron Crown, was only waiting for the right moment to declare her adhesion to the Coalition. Prussia, too, was inclining to repent her subservience. "They see more clearly," wrote the Russian envoy when he reached Berlin, "Buonaparte is no more a guardian angel, but an out-and-out devil, and they are persuaded that this devil will gobble

¹ Gower to Mulgrave, June 29th. Endorsed, "Received July 29th." *Foreign Office, Russia*, 58. Printed in Holland Rose: *Third Coalition*, p. 183.

Germany if they let him alone and persist any longer in their inaction."¹

Of the effect this intelligence had upon Pitt's mind there is no direct evidence. But the action he took suggests that his quick eye for a situation saw in it the moment of all others for high action. Though England was in the crisis of her defence against the long-threatened invasion, he did not hesitate to give new impetus to his measure for attack. Certainly it was the hour at which England at all risks should show she had the power and the will to strike, for all Napoleon's effort to bind her hands. What at least is certain, is that in the height of the disturbance which the news from the Texel was causing, and regardless of the resulting strain on the Navy, Pitt laid fresh burdens upon it. The Russian demand had to be honoured, and on July 27th he decided that the Commander-in-chief in the Mediterranean was to concert measures with Craig to carry out the joint action in Italy, which the "extended" Russian plan demanded. This meant providing transport and escort for 25,000 troops from the Black Sea, as well as for the 6000 of Craig's force at Malta.²

But this was not all. For in a separate despatch from Gower there was news of a fresh danger against which England must be prepared to strike alone, whether the Powers took action or not. "The state of affairs in Constantinople," wrote the Ambassador, "is at this moment extremely critical." The Russian Ambassador at the Porte had sent his Government word that General Joubert had arrived there with a personal letter from Napoleon to the Sultan and a large sum of money, to secure adherents

¹ Novosilzow to Worontzow, Berlin, July 18th: Holland Rose, *Third Coalition*, p. 182 and 186-7. This last despatch was not actually communicated to the Foreign Office till August 3rd, but its purport must have been known to Pitt much earlier. See next page, note 2.

² Hawkesbury to the Admiralty, July 27th: *Admiralty In-letters (Secretary of State)*, 4199.

to the French interests. A new Grand Vizier devoted to France had come to power; a typically indiscreet Russian governor had committed an untimely violation of Turkish territory; our own Ambassador had not yet appeared, and the negotiations which had been in progress for a Russo-Turkish Alliance had been broken off.¹ Here then was a recrudescence of the old danger which Nelson had scotched at the Nile, and for all his preoccupations Pitt would not leave it alone. At Cork there was still Eyre Coote's force waiting in inaction. When it was known that Villeneuve had left the West Indies, it had been ordered to stand fast a second time. Coote's appointment as Governor of Jamaica, however, was not cancelled, and General David Baird had succeeded him in command. This force then was now disposable, and Barham was informed that the Government intended to use it for a secret expedition to capture the Cape of Good Hope. It would consist of between six and seven thousand men, and the Admiralty was to provide a battle squadron and cruisers for the escort under Sir Home Popham.²

For all the serious state of affairs in Turkey, the idea is open to an obvious criticism. If Pitt was really focussing his plan of campaign on a combined offensive movement against Napoleon in Italy in concert with Russia, elementary strategy demanded that he should concentrate all disposable force upon that movement. It can only be said it was no mere question of elementary strategy. The situation was confused by the mutual suspicions of the parties to the still

¹ Same to same, June 29th: Rose, *Third Coalition*, p. 185.

² *In letters (Secretary of State)*, 4200, July 25th. This order and that last mentioned of the 27th were anterior to the receipt of Gower's despatches, on which they appear so obviously to be founded. According to the endorsement, the despatches were received at the Foreign Office on July 29th. But it is almost certain Worontzow had received the information they contained some days earlier, and according to his practice he would have communicated it at once to Pitt. Gower explains that he himself had had the information "some days before he had sent it on," but that he had been prevented from writing "by a severe indisposition."

incomplete Coalition. Though its prospects were certainly brightening, the British ministers could not suddenly dismiss their suspicion that the continental Powers concerned were perhaps playing for their own hands, and might at any moment come to terms with Napoleon and leave England in the lurch. If so, Pitt's great scheme to cover India by forcing Napoleon back from his advanced position in the Mediterranean would fall to the ground. In so precarious and unstable a diplomatic situation, was it or was it not good strategy to prepare a second line of defence for our Eastern trade and possessions? No one but a beginner in the study of war would presume to answer the question with confidence. The answer would seem to turn on the reality of the Turkish danger, and on the exact degree of reliance that at the time could be placed upon the prospect of the Coalition. Of that there was certainly no better judge than Pitt. In any case the enterprise cannot be dismissed as a mere eccentric or sporadic attack having no organic connection with the main issue. It was in fact an essential part in the comprehensive scheme of Imperial defence.

Its higher strategical purpose was clearly set forth in Pitt's instructions to Lord Cornwallis, the Governor-General of India. Castlereagh's despatch, which conveyed them, informed him that since it was possible that India might require reinforcements before they could be sent out from home, he was authorised in case of need to call on Baird and direct Admiral Popham to cover the passage of the force against interference from the French base at Mauritius. But it was only to be done in case of urgent danger to India. "The whole of this instruction," Castlereagh explained, "proceeds upon the principle that the true value of the Cape to Great Britain is its being considered and treated at all times as an outpost subservient to the protection and security of our Indian possessions. When in our

hands it must afford considerable accommodation and facilities to our intercourse with those possessions, but its occupation is perhaps even more material as depriving the enemy of the best intermediate position between Europe and India for assembling a large European armament for service in the East Indies," as well as for the intercepting and protection of trade. Lord Cornwallis therefore, before making a call on the expeditionary force, was to consider fully on these lines the relative advantage of summoning Baird to India or holding the Cape.¹

The reasoning is plain. In the previous winter, when Napoleon began to regard the invasion of England as impracticable, he had formulated a plan for such an attack on India as Castlereagh's despatch indicated. Seeing how confident the Government was in the impregnability of their home defence, there was every possibility that Napoleon would shortly be forced back once more on Colonial attack as a means of containing the British forces; and Joubert's appearance at Constantinople gave strong colour to the apprehension that India would be the possession chosen. If so, no success in the Mediterranean could prevent his making such an attack, particularly if he secured the co-operation of the Porte. Moreover, howsoever strong our position in the Mediterranean and the Near East, it would still be open to him to turn it by way of the Cape. So long as it was in the hands of his Dutch vassals it was a real danger. It gave him a line of operation at least as formidable as that by way of Egypt and the Red Sea, or of Turkey and the Persian Gulf. To mass all our available force on the one line was to leave the other open. It lay over an open sea, and it was consequently impossible to secure it by naval force alone, as in the case of the narrow seas at home. It is therefore unsafe to

¹ Castlereagh to Cornwallis, September 10th. (Copy communicated to the Admiralty.) *Admiralty In-letters* (Secretary of State), 4200.

dismiss the idea with contempt by applying crudely the simple test of concentration. It was in effect a concentration of effort upon one object, but from geographical exigencies and the existing political conditions it was more than doubtful whether the correlative concentration of force could surely be effective on one line of operations only. In any case the whole question will serve as a warning that the broad combined problems of Imperial defence are not to be solved off-hand by the facile application of maxims which are the outcome of narrower and less complex continental conditions.

Such then were the involved considerations through which Pitt and Barham had to steer their course, as they faced the crisis in the Narrow Seas. They are considerations which at first sight may appear to have little to do with it, but in fact it will be seen that they determined the crucial movement which we have now to consider: and no right judgment of it is possible unless they be kept firmly in mind.

CHAPTER XVII

THE MASTERSTROKE

It was on August 10th that Villeneuve intended to begin his final movement from Coruña. "I am sailing," he wrote to Decrès on that day, "and I shall make for Brest or Cadiz according to circumstances. The enemy observe us here too closely to leave any hope of concealing our movement."¹

Light westerly airs prevailed, and owing to part of the fleet being up the Ferrol arm of the bay it was not till the 13th that he had all his force together outside. So severe had been the punishment which Calder had inflicted upon the original Combined Squadron, that even as reinforced by the divisions of Gourdon and Grandallana, it only numbered twenty-nine of the line. Of these fourteen were the raw Ferrol ships that had had no sea or fleet training whatever, and of the whole number only one, the *Principe de Asturias* 120, was a three-decker. Six were 80-gun ships and the rest seventy-fours. The cruisers numbered six frigates and four corvettes. There was still, however, a fond hope that the *Didon* might get touch with Allemand, and that the addition of his squadron would bring the whole Combined Fleet up to thirty-four of the line with another first-rate.

It was precisely during these days that the British counter-concentration was taking place off Ushant. Stirling having found Rochefort empty came in on the 13th just as Villeneuve was getting his squadrons together out-

¹ Desbrière, iv. 778.

dismiss the idea with contempt by applying crudely the simple test of concentration. It was in effect a concentration of effort upon one object, but from geographical exigencies and the existing political conditions it was more than doubtful whether the correlative concentration of force could surely be effective on one line of operations only. In any case the whole question will serve as a warning that the broad combined problems of Imperial defence are not to be solved off-hand by the facile application of maxims which are the outcome of narrower and less complex continental conditions.

Such then were the involved considerations through which Pitt and Barham had to steer their course, as they faced the crisis in the Narrow Seas. They are considerations which at first sight may appear to have little to do with it, but in fact it will be seen that they determined the crucial movement which we have now to consider: and no right judgment of it is possible unless they be kept firmly in mind.

CHAPTER XVII

THE MASTERSTROKE

It was on August 10th that Villeneuve intended to begin his final movement from Coruña. "I am sailing," he wrote to Decrès on that day, "and I shall make for Brest or Cadiz according to circumstances. The enemy observe us here too closely to leave any hope of concealing our movement."¹

Light westerly airs prevailed, and owing to part of the fleet being up the Ferrol arm of the bay it was not till the 13th that he had all his force together outside. So severe had been the punishment which Calder had inflicted upon the original Combined Squadron, that even as reinforced by the divisions of Gourdon and Grandallana, it only numbered twenty-nine of the line. Of these fourteen were the raw Ferrol ships that had had no sea or fleet training whatever, and of the whole number only one, the *Principe de Asturias* 120, was a three-decker. Six were 80-gun ships and the rest seventy-fours. The cruisers numbered six frigates and four corvettes. There was still, however, a fond hope that the *Didon* might get touch with Allemand, and that the addition of his squadron would bring the whole Combined Fleet up to thirty-four of the line with another first-rate.

It was precisely during these days that the British counter-concentration was taking place off Ushant. Stirling having found Rochefort empty came in on the 13th just as Villeneuve was getting his squadrons together out-

¹ Desbrière, iv. 778.

side Coruña, and the same evening Cornwallis's cruisers signalled the approach of Calder. Next morning, before Villeneuve had been able to move, he joined, and the following day, the 15th, Nelson appeared.

Ever since the 9th, when he had made enough westing to drop the northerly winds, he had been steering a course for his original rendezvous fifty leagues west of Scilly. By noon on the 13th he was about 150 miles short of it, and in the course of the afternoon he fell in with the *Niobe*. She was three days from Cornwallis, and could report that when she parted company nothing had been heard of the Combined Squadron in the Bay. She had, however, spoken a Portuguese, who said he had sighted it a short time previously steering north. Assured by the information that Ireland was not in danger, Nelson immediately bore away to the eastward, signalling the Ushant rendezvous, and by six o'clock on the evening of the 15th he was saluting Cornwallis's flag.¹

Without even calling on Nelson to report himself, Cornwallis, on Barham's instructions, ordered him and the *Victory* home for their long-earned rest. Stirling in the *Glory* was also sent in with several other vessels that required a refit. In the end he had some thirty-six of the line with his flag, or on their way to join it, besides the *Dragon* and *Goliath*, which were to the southward in search respectively of Nelson and Calder. Considering its preponderance in three-deckers, and its high efficiency, it was a force that completely commanded the situation. Had the allied Admirals come north, even with Allemand in company, they certainly must have been defeated long before Ganteaume could have come to their assistance.²

¹ Nelson's *Journal*, and *Log of the Victory* (Hardy).

² The number of three-deckers with Cornwallis at the moment is difficult to determine exactly. But counting the *Victory* and *Glory*, he must have had nine or ten. A return in the *Barham Papers*, dated August 20th, shows the Home Fleet with ten three-deckers at sea, and five in reserve refitting.

Such then was the actual situation. What did Napoleon make of it? Did he doubt from the first—even before the concentration was complete—that all hope of the invasion was at an end?

On August 3rd, as we have seen, he had reached Boulogne, displaying an inspiring confidence that the command of the Channel was about to pass into his hands. But that is by no means conclusive that he saw his way clear for attempting his hazardous enterprise. The indications of a coalition in his rear were too ominous to be ignored. Austria was massing troops in Venetia and the Tyrol, constant communications were passing between Naples, Corfu, and Malta, and a levy *en masse* of the Neapolitan militia was reported by St. Cyr to be going on in secret. Before quitting Paris Napoleon directed Talleyrand to prepare an ultimatum for both the Austrian and Neapolitan courts, and then, without saying a word to his ministers, he had suddenly left for Boulogne. The day after he reached the coast, he approved the text of the Austrian note, and directed that Naples was to be threatened with instant invasion if the report of the general enrolment proved correct. He had no doubt, as he afterwards confessed, that these threats would prove effective, and that he would be left free to proceed with his invasion.

Such was his state of mind when, before the ink of his last order was well dry, urgent Spanish despatches came in from Talleyrand. They announced nothing less disturbing than that Nelson had almost certainly reappeared at Gibraltar, and was believed to have entered the Mediterranean.

Talleyrand made no secret of what it meant. Ville-neuve was no one knew where, and all the far-sighted minister could see was that, if he attempted to approach the Channel under the delusion that the British concentration was broken, he was doomed to destruction. The

position was alarming in the extreme. Napoleon's sudden and quite unexpected departure from Paris filled Talleyrand with dread lest his master's gambling spirit had got the better of him, and that at last he really meant to stake everything on the desperate throw from which he had so long held back. "This unexpected news," he wrote to Napoleon, "has made an impression upon me which I try in vain to calm. This kind of agitation is only to be endured by those of your servants who are supported by your presence." Then he proceeded to tell his master plainly that he was beaten. He was sure that Nelson would come north, and he calculated that his arrival would give the English a line of at least fifty-four vessels. "This unforeseen concentration," he urged, "leaves no doubt that the project of invasion is impracticable for the moment; but as the reality of this project cannot but gain the strongest confirmation by the presence of your Majesty at Boulogne, it is probable it will decide the English to mass at some Channel rendezvous, and this disposition will give the Combined Fleet time and means to get into a Spanish port."¹

Napoleon after his manner did not deign to traverse his minister's conclusions; he simply refused to admit the facts. "All this news about Nelson," he wrote to Decrès, "seems doubtful. What the devil could he be after in the Mediterranean? Do they want twenty of the line there?" At this time, it is to be remembered, he had not heard of Craig's arrival at Malta, and not a word of Villeneuve. He knew nothing of his arrival in Europe or of the battle. He

¹ P. Bertrand, *Lettres inédites de Talleyrand à Napoléon*, 120. The French Foreign Office had at this time a department of naval intelligence. Its last report was dated July 20th, and it showed that the British had forty-four of the line on the coasts of Spain and France. In the evening Talleyrand sent the Emperor "une boîte arrangée conformément à l'état présent," *ibid.*, p. 122. A fortnight later Napoleon wrote to him, "The work that is being done in the Foreign Office on the movement of the enemy's ships of the line is very useful, but it might be more complete."—*Correspondance*, xi, 146, August 27th.

still believed not only that he had frightened his enemy into an abject defensive, but that they had no suspicion of his great plan. "They little know," he added, "what they have got hanging in their ear. Everything here is going well, and certes if we are masters of the passage for twelve hours, England has lived. I can't make out why we have no news from Ferrol. I can't believe Magon never reached him [Villeneuve]. I am telling Ganteaume by telegraph to keep out in the Bertheaume Road."¹

Three more days went by and then came news, not of Villeneuve, but again of Nelson. After watering and re-victualing at Gibraltar and Tetuan he had come back out the Straits, and as long since as July 25th he had been seen from the Cadiz signal stations making for Cape St. Vincent.² This same day, whether before or after receiving the news, we cannot tell, Napoleon told Talleyrand not to send off the note to Vienna before he had seen it again, and directed his Guard to leave Paris for Boulogne. Then on the morrow came news at last of Villeneuve. It told of his indecisive action with Calder and how he had put into Vigo to refit, but it expressed his intention of proceeding at once according to the plan to join hands with the Ferrol divisions and come on to Brest. Napoleon chose, or at least pretended, to see in all this the realisation of his hopes. He immediately had a victory proclaimed, and announced that Villeneuve had fulfilled his mission, but at the same time he ordered his Guard to stand fast in Paris.³

He was clearly at his wits' end. As the vigilant financial world saw him apparently resolving to hazard the desperate throw his credit was falling dangerously, and he was strenuously trying to restore it by elaborating the success of Villeneuve's action. To Villeneuve himself, who had

¹ August 4th ; *Correspondance*, xi. 59.

² Desbrière, iv. 736.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 739, *note*.

written in the lowest spirits, he sent word to point out encouragingly that the British success was really insignificant, and that he still hoped he would proceed with his mission. He persuaded himself, on information from his spies in England, that the Admiralty believed the Combined Squadron had gone to Cadiz or was coming to the Texel, and once more he urged Marmont "to do the impossible" to draw the English in his direction. He must occupy at least twelve of the line. It was indeed the impossible; for ten days were still to pass before Marmont saw half that number barring his exit. The utmost force ever devoted to him was eight weak ships that were fit for nothing else. The only serious effect of the feint, as we have seen, was for a moment to interfere with Barham's arrangements for reinforcing Cornwallis in order to permit of his detaching a force to strike at Allemand.¹

By stubbornly ignoring the news of Nelson and by crediting the British Admiralty with childish simplicity, Napoleon seems at this moment, if ever, really to have believed that his hour had come, and for three days was all amiability and encouragement. But on the 13th the note was changed. Word came in from Villeneuve that, instead of forming his junction outside Ferrol and immediately coming on, he had entered the port before the Emperor's stringent prohibition had come to his hands. Napoleon was beside himself. It is of this day that Daru, the head of his War Office staff, tells the well-known story. The Emperor sent for him, and he found him raving up and down the room railing coarse abuse upon his unhappy Admiral. Then, suddenly stopping, he cried, "Sit down there and write," and with that he dictated without a check the whole of the orders for his immortal campaign of Austerlitz.²

¹ See Desbrière, iv. 749 and *ante*, p. 256.

² For this story and the doubts as to its entire credibility see Auriol, v. p. 452 note and 493 note. He cites *Mémoires de Ségur*, p. 158, where the date is given as August 13th. Thiers puts the incident after the 23rd, but gives no authority for his date (*Consulat et Empire*, v. 464).

Whatever truth there may be in the story, it must not be taken to mean that Napoleon had wholly abandoned his idea of invasion. It may have been intended merely to give emphasis to his threat to Vienna. The same day he ordered Talleyrand to see the Austrian Ambassador and urge instant demobilisation in the strongest terms. "Already," so the minister was to tell him, "he (Napoleon) has suspended the execution of his projects of hostility, and has recognised that he cannot cross into England with 150,000 men when his southern frontiers are menaced."¹

Whether or not he meant what he said there is no sign yet that he had admitted himself beaten. That same fevered day, with increasing passion, he poured forth letter after letter to Decrès with the instructions he was to send to Villeneuve. By fair means or foul the despairing Admiral must be heartened, cajoled, or bullied into getting to sea again. If this was not the real object of these extraordinary documents—if Napoleon really believed in the possibility of what he wrote—he had entirely lost grip of the situation. In his frenzy—for it was hardly less—he pictured the British squadrons deceived by his fancied diversions and scattered upon the seas—off Ireland, in the North Sea, in the Mediterranean, everywhere but where they were—in the act of gathering at the fatal point. Calculation after calculation of the British force and disposition he showered upon Decrès and Villeneuve, each more groundless, more sanguine than the last, and all full of glaring contradictions and false estimates. But his labour was thrown away; for at that moment Villeneuve was already sailing from Coruña with his path barred before him. It was no longer a question of what he did or left undone. The game was played, and Napoleon was outmanœuvred.

For all his fierce refusal to admit the truth which

¹ August 13th; *Correspondance*, xi. 81.

Talleyrand had told him, he was even then preparing to face it. On those same critical days—the 13th and 14th—he was actually directing Talleyrand to issue his revised ultimatum to Austria. “The answer,” he wrote, “is easy to forecast. It will contain denials, protestations—in a word, dilatory phrases. That will not do for me. My decision is made. I will attack Austria and be at Vienna before the month of November, to face the Russians if they show themselves.”¹ Possibly then he had already half realised his failure. On the 15th, not knowing that Villeneuve had sailed, he wrote again in despair at what seemed to him the invincible ineptitude of his Admiral. On his head he visited the results of his own confused orders, and could not see they had brought their own reward. His failure to grasp the foundations of the game, which every British Admiral knew by heart, is almost incredible in so great a genius for war. In this very letter he naïvely exposes what can only be called the simplicity with which his fantastic plan had been framed. “What I find so extraordinary in all this,” he says, “is that the place of Allemand’s rendezvous . . . is just the position where the battle was fought.” Surely the barest knowledge of the theory and practice of naval warfare would have taught him that that was just the most natural thing to expect. His confident egotism would not recognise that he was playing against past-masters of a game at which he was only an amateur. What he took for astute strategical inspirations were to his opponents the commonplaces of their craft, and while he stood fuming between bewilderment and wounded self-confidence, making confusion worse confounded, the men of the old tradition were playing in sure mastery high over his head.

It was now they delivered their masterstroke. In all the campaign there is no movement—not even Nelson’s

¹ Aug. 13th; *Correspondance*, xi. 80.

chase of Villeneuve—that breathes more deeply the true spirit of war, and yet nothing in it has been more severely criticised. Let us see then exactly how things stood. The middle of August was the actual crisis of Napoleon's long-prepared threat. He himself was at Boulogne, alert to give the word at any moment, and the Grand Army and its transport were ready or as nearly ready as Napoleon's genius could get them. But at the vital moment the great concentration of the British battle fleet at the mouth of the Channel was also complete, and it made the movement of the Grand Army impossible. So long as that concentration held England was impregnable, even to the most formidable attack that had ever threatened her. On the other hand, the main fleet of the enemy was at Ferrol free to come north, but also free to go south for Cadiz and the Mediterranean. For all Barham or Cornwallis could tell this was the game Napoleon was playing—the game that Talleyrand was actually urging his master to play. In the eyes of the British Admirals the whole project of the invasion was so desperate that they could not believe it was real, and, with experienced penetration, they detected in it a device to force upon them a concentration off Brest, which would leave Villeneuve free to strike to the southward. To prevent such a movement of the Combined Fleet was, as the British war-plan stood, no less important than to overwhelm it if it came north. What then should Cornwallis do? Should he rest content with the control of the invasion theatre: or should he strike to control the whole theatre of the campaign? Should he be satisfied with impregnable defence, or should he risk it to deprive the enemy of all initiative? “The Western Squadron is the mainspring from which all offensive operations must proceed.” Lord Barham was even then writing the words to him, but the letter had not yet arrived.¹ There was not

¹ Barham to Cornwallis, Aug. 15th, *ante*, p. 257.

a day to lose; at any time Villeneuve might be moving, and if Cornwallis waited for orders from the Admiralty it might be too late to act. Surely higher responsibility never rested on an Admiral at sea. Yet there is not a sign of hesitation in the stout old officer. To wait for orders was to abandon the game. In his room at the Admiralty Barham was telling him to strike when he saw the chance, "without waiting for orders from home," and he did not wait, even for the permission.

Not for more than twenty-four hours did he hold the concentration. On the 16th, the day after Nelson joined, Cornwallis signed orders to Calder to take eighteen of the line, which, with the *Dragon* and *Goliath* already to the southward, would give him twenty, and proceed off Ferrol, there to use his utmost exertion to prevent the enemy sailing again, or to intercept them if they attempted it. The squadron detailed included five three-deckers and seven of Nelson's squadron, with his second-in-command, Rear-Admiral Louis, at their head in the *Canopus* 80—and seeing the high condition of the force contrasted with that of Villeneuve's sickly, heterogeneous, and demoralised fleet, it may be taken as fairly its equal. Such at least was Villeneuve's own opinion.¹

Though at the time Cornwallis believed on Calder's report that Allemand had probably joined Villeneuve, and would have raised his force to well over thirty of the line, he could spare no more, but even this danger would not deter him from the bold stroke the situation demanded.²

¹ *Blockade of Brest*, ii. 344, 347, and see *post*, p. 285.

² See Captain Hallowell (*Tigre*) to Nelson, August 17th: *Add. MSS.* 34930. According to him Calder reported that Allemand had joined Villeneuve in Ferrol, and Cornwallis calculated the Combined Fleet at twenty-five French and thirteen or fourteen Spanish. See Captain John Whitby (Cornwallis's flag-captain) to Nelson, August 19th: *Ibid.*, "It appears to me nothing could have been more *à propos* than your junction here, as it has enabled the Admiral to make a large detachment, which the posture of the enemy seemed to make highly necessary—for if the Rochefort squadron have got into Ferrol, the enemy have there thirty sail of the line." Barham also had "no doubt of the Rochefort ships being at Ferrol." Barham to Cornwallis, *Hist. MSS. Com., Various Coll.*, vi. 410; same to Pitt, *Barham Papers*, iii. 97.

He had in fact divided his fleet, keeping the minimum of eighteen of the line with his flag, of which about ten were three-deckers.¹

This was the move which Napoleon characterised as an *insigne bêtise* when he heard of it. "What a chance Villeneuve has missed!" he wrote. "By coming down upon Brest from the open he might have played prisoners' base with Calder's squadron and fallen upon Cornwallis; or with his thirty of the line have beaten the English twenty, and obtained a decisive superiority."² It is in this opinion that so many modern critics have followed him. Forgetting, as we shall see, under what a smart of irritation he uttered the snarl, they have solemnly endorsed his testy criticism. We are told that the great movement is "condemned by the simplest and most generally admitted principles of warfare," that it was "a strategical blunder," "a blunder which might have proved fatal," and more to the same effect.³

It is a point that goes to the root of naval strategy, and only by a careful study of the case in detail can we understand why at that hour in which the war experience of centuries culminated the judgment of the veterans concerned was unanimous, without hesitation, and clean contrary to that of their recent critics.

As to the risk involved—the possibility of Napoleon's game of "prisoners' base"—let us first take the official British view. Certainly it was not that the result of an action between Villeneuve and Calder would be as Napoleon professed to believe, and there is nothing in the whole war to support the Emperor's sanguine opinion. On all the

¹ Ganteaume to Decrès, August 23rd: Desbrière, iv. 806.

² To Decrès, August 29th: *Correspondance*, xi. 160.

³ *Influence of Sea Power on the Revolution and Empire*, ii. 176; *Cambridge Modern History*, ix. 226; *Blockade of Brest*, ii.; *Introduction*, p. xxxix.; Laird Clowes, *The Royal Navy*, v. 119. It is believed that no naval officer, except Captain Mahan, has taken this view. Neither Admiral Colomb, Jurien de la Gravière, nor Desbrière shared it, and it has been distinctly repudiated by Sir John K. Laughton.

evidence an action fought out between the two squadrons would have put both of them off the board, and this was Nelson's view. When the division of the fleet was known he was consulted by the anxious ministers. "This I ventured without any fear," he wrote, "that if Calder got fairly close alongside them with twenty-seven or twenty-eight sail, by the time the enemy had beat our fleet soundly they would do us no harm this year."¹

Nor did Cornwallis fear for his own position the possibility of "prisoners' base." Besides the *Dragon* and *Goliath* he had three cruisers watching Ferrol, as well as two or three others in the neighbourhood.² "Should their lordships," he wrote, in reporting the detachment of Calder, "be pleased to order the ships in any other direction it may easily be effected." Clearly he considered them as strategically still under his hand. In his view they were still concentrated in the real sense of the term, within supporting distance of each other. "I have thought," he concluded, "the step I have now taken might meet with their lordships' approbation, as a means of keeping the enemy's squadrons in check, if that from Rochefort is still at sea."³

Now the critics omit to observe that their lordships did approve. It was only natural they should, for the moment they heard of Nelson's return they sent Cornwallis an order to do just what he had done, with only one small difference. They were dissatisfied with Calder's conduct after the action, and he was not to command. Barham and Cornwallis then were independently at one upon the movement—a fact which should make critics pause. The order was signed on August 19th, and it bade Cornwallis retain eighteen of the line off Ushant and detach Sir Charles Cotton, his own

¹ To Captain Keats, August 24th: Nicolas, vii. 16.

² *Naiad*, *Nimble*, and *Iris* had been sent down specially after Calder joined. *Hazard*, *Révolutionnaire*, and *Melampus* were already to the southward. —*Blockade of Brest*, ii. 337, 345.

³ *Ibid.*, ii. 343, August 16th.

second-in-command, with two flag-officers under him, off Ferrol. He was to give him twenty of the line and as many more as he might have at his disposal up to thirty-two.¹

It was not that they did not realise the gravity of the situation at home. Only ten days before they had given Cornwallis formal warning "that the enemy have it in contemplation to attempt immediately the invasion of this country from the ports of Holland and Boulogne." It was the period of spring tides, when the Dutch squadron would be able to put to sea, and in a private letter to the Admiral Barham had called special attention to the danger. "I just write one line," he said, "to apprise you, ministers look to an invasion soon, and have given directions to all the military corps. I have done the same privately to the Admirals at all the ports. I take it for granted you will take a near station during the spring tides in order to reinforce the Eastern force if necessary."² The imminence of the danger then, such as it was, was fairly faced, but none the less both Pitt and Barham were determined not to be forced back upon the defensive—determined not to devote to it more force than they felt gave them a sufficiently firm grip upon the threatened invasion, and determined not to be intimidated out of their offensive plan of campaign. To have kept the fleet massed where it was would have been to surrender the initiative to Napoleon, to have acted tamely upon the defensive. And it is curious that the critics who most severely condemn the movement are just those who are the most fanatical prophets of the offensive.

"This division of the fleet," writes the most weighty of them, "which is condemned by the simplest and most generally admitted principles of warfare, transferred to Villeneuve all the advantage of central position and

¹ *In-letters (Secret Orders)* 1363. Signed "Barham, Gambier, Garlies."

² Barham to Pitt, August 9th, *Barham's Papers*, iii. 97; and same to Cornwallis, August 10th, *Hist. MSS. Com., Various Collections*, vi. 410.

superior force, and was stigmatised by Napoleon as a 'glaring blunder.' . . . This censure was just."¹ But how did it transfer the central position to Villeneuve? If against all probability he had dared to face the concentration which he knew was to the north of him; if by a miracle he had succeeded in eluding Cornwallis's cruiser screen and had got between him and Calder, he would in a sense have obtained it, but only in regard to our defensive area. Looking at the whole theatre of the campaign, he had the central position already. At Ferrol he was interposed between our main force and Collingwood with the Mediterranean fleet. On our keeping control of the Mediterranean rested our engagement with the Powers of the Coalition. Pitt at the moment was absorbed in fulfilling that engagement. It could only be done by preserving the initiative which we had gained at Malta and Corfu, and for that it was essential that we should forthwith wrest the central position from Villeneuve. Having gained that position, Napoleon had the choice of striking at the Channel or within the Straits, and as the political situation had developed in the past weeks, it was vital to deny him the choice. The seeds which Pitt had sown so patiently were ripe for the counter-attack. As Cornwallis had said, the enemy's fleets must be "held in check" and the control of military action in the Mediterranean placed beyond doubt. Had the movement not taken place, as Codrington wrote of Villeneuve's fleet on the eve of Trafalgar, "this immense

¹ Mahan, *Sea Power (French Revolution)*, ii. 576. It is only just to the learned and gallant author to note that this criticism was written before he had had any experience of war direction. After he had had such experience he gave a definition of concentration that seems incompatible with his censure of Cornwallis: "Like a fan that opens and shuts, vessels thus organically bound together possess the power of wide sweep, which ensures exertion over a wide field of ocean, and at the same time that of mutual support, because dependent upon and controlled from a common centre. Such is concentration reasonably understood—not huddled together like a drove of sheep, but distributed with a regard to a common purpose and linked together by the effectual energy of a single will."—*War of 1812*, i. 316.

force would probably by this time have been already in Toulon to co-operate with the French army in Italy."¹ The central position of the whole theatre, in fact, stretched from Ferrol to Brest, and it was this position that Barham and Cornwallis decided at once and simultaneously to reoccupy.

It is obvious, then, that if the movement be considered in the light of the whole situation, it was one which has ample justification in the universal principles of strategy. But beyond those principles lay a further vindication in the special exigencies of maritime war. The case indeed affords a typical example of the frequent error which arises from attempting to measure naval strategy by the elementary maxims derived from warfare on land. The question once more was not purely military. It was distorted by the intrusion of commerce protection. It was the season for the home-coming of the great convoys. The concentration at Ferrol directly threatened them, and the necessity for securing their approach was a dominant consideration in Lord Barham's mind. "Ferrol," he wrote to Cornwallis, "is the great object till our East India and West India fleets are arrived, and which may be in the course of a fortnight. The heavy frigates, as far as you can spare them, cannot be employed better than meeting them towards the coast of Ireland." That is, he was in the usual way to provide a covering squadron against the enemy's battle squadron and strengthen the convoy's escort as they reached the danger area of the home terminal. And then Barham added, "We have at this moment received yours, and you have entered completely into my views."²

It may be urged by purists trained in the continental school that such deflections are essentially heretical. But in truth each case must be decided on its merits as a

¹ Bouchier, *Memoirs of Codrington*, i. 56, October 16, 1805.

² *Hist. MSS. Com., Var. Coll.*, vi. 410, and see Appendix G, p. 519.

balance of advantage against risk. It is for a naval power to command the sea for all purposes if it has the power. In this case we shall see, as we proceed, the safety of these particular convoys was an object of so much importance as to justify any reasonable risk, while to suffer a concentration to be forced upon us which would leave the enemy free to strike them with impunity would have been to admit an inability in the fleet which nothing in the situation could excuse.

And was there any real danger? Bold as was the division of the fleet, a closer examination of the conditions will show that it was well within fair risk of war. From the prisoners taken in Calder's action the condition of the Combined Fleet was well known. We also knew how inadequate were the resources of Ferrol to supply so large a force as Villeneuve's for the time necessary for a campaign in the Channel. His respect for Nelson's unlocated fleet was fully manifest, and to war-ripened judgments like those of Barham and Cornwallis it must have seemed morally certain that Villeneuve would never venture to come north on his own responsibility. It was true Napoleon might force on him the desperate movement, but in that case there was a consideration well known both to Barham and Cornwallis that practically ensured its failure. They knew the Combined Fleet was so much exhausted and that the resources of Ferrol were so inadequate to supply it, that one of two things must happen. Villeneuve might either wait in the port long enough to complete his stores for a Channel campaign, in which case Calder would be in plenty of time to blockade him, or he might hurry out with his supplies incomplete, in which case it would be impossible for him to keep the sea long enough to carry out Napoleon's intentions. If, therefore, he moved before Calder arrived, it would mean almost certainly that he was bound for Cadiz or to attack the convoys.

Finally, if these calculations proved false—if Villeneuve in desperation did stake everything on the chance of “playing prisoners’ base” with Calder and striking a swift blow at Cornwallis alone, what would be the results? It is usual to assume that the Ushant fleet was inferior to that of Villeneuve. But it is to be remembered that Cornwallis had ten three-deckers and the rest all seasoned ships of eighty and seventy-four guns, as against Villeneuve’s motley twenty-nine partly French and partly Spanish. Of these ten at least were mere floating barracks, and amongst those ten his only three-decker.¹ Now with such a force Cornwallis had two possibilities before him. If he chose or was forced to fight, the effect must be that Villeneuve’s fleet would be fit for little afterwards. If he avoided and played the old game of Howe and Kempenfelt, moving to the westward till Calder rejoined, experience showed that Ganteaume and Villeneuve together would not dare enter the Channel without having first brought him to action.²

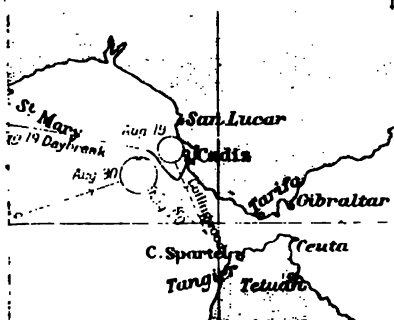
Every precaution to meet such a situation was taken. Orders of the most urgent description had been sent to the Port Admirals to get everything to sea that would float, and Barham calculated that he had ready or nearly ready for emergent service in the Channel 15 three-deckers, 4 eighty-gun ships, and about 35 other two-deckers belonging to the Western Squadron alone; and besides these there were 9 two-deckers at sea with Lord Keith and 5 more fitting in

¹ On the accepted basis of two two-deckers to one three-decker the tactical coefficient of Cornwallis’ fleet was $(10 \times 2) + 8 = 28$ against that of Villeneuve $(1 \times 2) + 28 = 30$.

² The most moderate and careful of the critics takes a different view of the result of Villeneuve’s catching Cornwallis alone. “It seems possible,” he says, “that in such circumstances Cornwallis would have had no course but to fly, and that the great concentration of fifty ships in the Channel might have been brought about.”—*Blockade of Brest*, ii. xxxix. But there can be no doubt that Cornwallis would have taken the traditional position which Drake had inaugurated and Howe and Kempenfelt had recaptured and would have hung to windward of the enemy if they attempted to enter the Channel. He might have refused action except on his own terms, and it was against all tradition and practice that he should have run:

the Thames.¹ Had the worst happened that Barham's strategy risked, had Villeneuve attempted to do what every Admiral in Napoleon's service knew to be madness, then there must have come upon the enemy in the narrow unfamiliar waters of the Channel—so dreadful with memories both for French and Spaniards—a catastrophe more terrible than the Armada—more decisive than Trafalgar itself.

¹ *Barham Papers*, August 20th.



and Co. London, New York, Bombay, Calcutta & :

CHAPTER XVIII

THE SOLUTION OF THE CRISIS

FROM the above considerations it will be seen that in the opinion of the responsible men the danger attending the division of the fleet was not for a moment to be weighed against the decisive advantage such a division alone could secure. The moral strength of the British position had been accurately calculated, but at the same time it must not be supposed the utmost care was not taken by material means to guard against the remote probability of a surprise from the south. Ferrol had not been left unwatched for a single day. On the contrary, Cornwallis had taken elaborate measures to keep touch with it. It was on August 9th that Villeneuve had begun to move his fleet outside, and that Calder had sent the *Dragon* to look into the bay. On the 10th she had returned with the *Æolus* fresh from locating Allemand. Their report was that all the Combined Fleet had come down to Coruña with the exception of eight vessels still windbound up at Ferrol. It was on this report that Calder had gone north to close on Ushant, and no sooner was he away than the *Nimble* appeared. She was a sloop Cornwallis had sent off to communicate with Stirling and Calder. Directly she was sighted by Villeneuve's cruisers she was chased off, but not before she too had seen Villeneuve at Coruña. Five sail were under way as though they had just joined—a fact which could only confirm Calder's impression that Allemand had arrived. Forthwith she sped back to warn the Admiral at Ushant.

She reached him early on the 14th, just after he had had the news from Calder. It was now he determined to divide his fleet, and the *Nimble* was immediately sent down again with other cruisers to keep observation till Calder should arrive.¹

What it was Villeneuve really meant to do has always been a matter of doubt. Did he or did he not intend to make any attempt to join hands with Ganteaume? In the despatch he sent to Allemand by the *Didon* he had said if he found any difficulty in getting to Brest his definitive destination would be Cadiz.² On the 10th he wrote to Decrès the letter already quoted: "I am sailing, and I shall make for Brest or Cadiz, according to circumstances. The enemy are watching us here too closely to leave any hope of concealing my course."³ He had no idea but what Calder was still off the port, but this was not the worst. The moral effect of Nelson's implacable chase had been extraordinary, and every one in his heart believed he was somewhere below the horizon with Calder, waiting till he had them well away from their port to strike his blow. The last news of him was that he had been seen speeding from the Straits towards Cape St. Vincent, and the inference that was drawn we have in a despatch written by General Beurnonville, the French ambassador at Madrid, to Talleyrand before it was known that Villeneuve had sailed. "We cannot reasonably suppose," he argued, "that the English squadrons are not concentrated, and to that I attribute the clinging of our admirals to Ferrol. Nelson and Calder have not less than twenty-seven of the line, several of which are three-deckers."⁴ In the opinion of

¹ Lieutenant Delafons to Cornwallis, August 11th: *Blockade of Brest*, II. 334, and *Log of the Nimble*, P.R.O.

² Desbrière, iv. 730.

³ *Ibid.*, 778.

⁴ Desbrière, *Trafalgar*, App. 38, and see Thiers, *Consulat et Empire*, v. 439.

Lauriston, the General in command of the troops in the fleet, the probability of such a concentration had entirely upset Villeneuve's equilibrium. "Indeed, Sire," he afterwards wrote to the Emperor, "the fear of Nelson has got the upper hand of him." The General himself was not free from the oppression. "It will not be long," he wrote in the same letter, "before we have Nelson down upon us; for we have learnt that with those eleven vessels he has sworn to follow us, even if it be to the Antipodes."¹

For three days more the westerly winds held the Ferrol division fast and delayed the final concentration. As they dallied in inaction, every hour was adding to the chances of Nelson and Calder getting together to intercept them; the obsession increased daily: and by the 13th, when the wind-bound ships eventually were able to reach Villeneuve, the last drop of his spirit seems to have ebbed away. Lauriston at least believed that by the time the fleet was under way and the final despatches had been sent off to Paris, Villeneuve had abandoned all intention of attempting to effect the junction with Ganteaume. "We are going definitely to Cadiz," the Admiral had said to him; "I have told the minister so."²

What Villeneuve had really written to Decrès in his last despatch was this: "I am about to sail, but I don't know what I shall do. Eight of the line keep in sight of the coast at eight leagues. They will follow us; I shall not be able to get contact with them, and they will close on the squadron before Brest or Cadiz, according as I make my course to the one port or the other. . . . I do not hesitate to say—to you—that I should be sorry to meet twenty of them. Our naval tactics are antiquated. We

¹ Desbrière, *Trafalgar*, App., 106, 108. This letter was not written till August 21st, when they were in Cadiz, but it serves to show the general feeling in the fleet. Nelson used the expression referred to in his letter to the Admiralty of May 7th.—Nicolas, vi. 428.

² Desbrière, *Trafalgar*, App., p. 105.

know nothing but how to place ourselves in line, and that is just what the enemy wants."¹

In face of this letter we might well dismiss Lauriston's story as an intentional perversion. His attitude was frankly hostile to Villeneuve, and his report was written with the avowed object of persuading Napoleon to supersede an Admiral who had lost his nerve, had entirely forfeited the confidence of the fleet, and was unfit to command it. But the General is, to a great extent, confirmed by the most careful and impartial authority we have—the *Journal* of Captain Escaño, Gravina's chief-of-the-staff. Under August 13th he enters simply, "We sailed for Cadiz," and this appears to have been the general belief.²

Whatever may have been Villeneuve's inmost intention, it is certain that he recognised the movement he had been ordered to make as one it was impossible to carry out with success, and probably without disaster. "Seeing that I had no confidence," he afterwards explained, "in the condition of my ships, in their sailing, and in their power of manœuvring together, the concentration of the enemy and the knowledge they possess of all my movements since I reached the coast of Spain, leave me no hope of being

¹ Thiers, *Consulat et Empire*, v. 442. This is the only known letter of this date (13th). The correspondence of Decrès was destroyed in the Tuilleries fire during the Commune after Thiers had worked from it. There are traces, however, of another letter. On September 8th, Napoleon wrote to Decrès: "After having had the despatches of Villeneuve, you ought never to have supposed he would come to Brest. He wrote to you, 'I am going to Cadiz,' " and then he refers to Lauriston's letter: *Correspondance*, xi. 183. Decrès, however, in acknowledging Villeneuve's letters on September 1st, implies that they left his destination uncertain.—Desbrière, iv. 822.

² Desbrière, *Trafalgar*, App., p. 7, and Report of the *Nimble*, post, p. 268. Decrès, even in attempting to defend his old friend, took the same view. "On August 10th," he says in his report to the Emperor, "the fleet weighed; several vessels collided and suffered damage. Numerous reconnaissances were engrossing the enemy's movements. The Admiral learned that Calder and Nelson had joined; his anxieties redoubled; he had only forty days' victuals. He remained in the bay till the 13th. Finally . . . he puts to sea, and steers first W.N.W., and on the 15th decides to make for Cadiz. It would seem, from the correspondence of Vice-Admiral Villeneuve, that he had taken this resolution as early as the 11th."—Desbrière, *Projets*, iv. 726 n.

able to fulfil the grand object for which the fleet was destined."¹

Every hour confirmed his depression. No sooner was he well started to the north-westward, than a sail was reported to the north-east. He at once went about, signalled to clear for action, and ran back under Cape Prior, keeping the port still under his lee. The precautions which Cornwallis had taken were beginning to work. The strange sail was the *Iris* 32, one of the cruisers he had just sent down to communicate with Calder. Immediately after leaving Cornwallis she had seen the *Naiad* escaping from Allemand's cruisers, and after speaking her had proceeded to Ferrol to inform Calder. Not knowing that he had raised the blockade, she at first mistook the Combined Fleet for our own Ferrol squadron, but she quickly discovered the truth, and was chased off to the northward by a frigate. Concluding, from the confusion that reigned in the enemy's fleet, they must be just out of port and on the point of sailing, she stood in again in the morning. During the night Villeneuve had resolved to resume his course and had tacked under cover of darkness, hoping probably to conceal his movement, but there again was the *Iris* watching him as closely as ever. This time the whole light division chased her off, but not before she had counted the combined force exactly; and when about two o'clock she dropped the fleet, she had fixed its course a little north of west.²

By this time she was not alone. To the south-eastward had appeared Captain Dundas in the *Naiad*. She was another of the cruisers which Cornwallis, on deciding to divide his fleet, had sent down to watch Villeneuve till Calder arrived. She herself had sighted some of the Com-

¹ Desbrière, *Projets*, iv. 786.

² Captain Edward Brace's report, enclosed in Captain Blackwood's despatch of August 16th: *Captains' letters*, 1534. He gives the course as W. by N. $\frac{1}{4}$ N., and the position Lat. $44^{\circ} 17'$, Long. $9^{\circ} 26'$.

bined Fleet in the morning, and the two captains seem to have had little doubt its movements indicated Cadiz as its destination. They decided, therefore, that while the *Naiad* carried the news to Cornwallis, the *Iris* should proceed to warn Collingwood of his danger.¹

Dundas reached Ushant early on the 19th, and Cornwallis immediately sent him back with another cruiser, the *Hazard*, to carry to Calder fresh orders and one of his lucid appreciations. "The enemy," he wrote, "are most likely bound for Cadiz or up the Mediterranean. It is hardly to be supposed that they have provisions enough to enable them to go to any distant part. The first object is to overtake them before they can get into port. It is not likely they have any troops on board, and, in that case, very improbable that they should steer for Ireland, nor do I think they would venture to cruise for any time in hopes of meeting a homeward-bound convoy." Calder, therefore, was to "go in pursuit of the enemy instead of going off Ferrol."²

No sooner were these orders well away than Cornwallis received from the Admiralty secret information of the approach of one of the convoys already referred to. It was that from the East Indies under Admiral Rainier. He was informed of the secret route it was to take, and was directed to have special regard to its safety if the movements of the enemy suggested it was their objective.³ To Cornwallis the instructions made no difference. He had discounted the danger already, and so far as was necessary or compatible with the higher strategy, he had provided for it. In any case, at this moment he had other fish to fry.

¹ *Captains' letters*, 1534 and Phillimore's *Life of Sir W. Parker*, i. 303.

² Cornwallis to Calder, August 19th: *In-letters*, 129. Endorsed, per *Naiad*, and a duplicate by *Hazard*. See also same to Marsden, August 19th: *Blockade of Brest*, ii. 346. This was the despatch in which he announced to the Admiralty his division of the fleet, which Barham was ordering at the same time.

³ Cornwallis to Marsden: *In-letters*, 129, August 20th.

On the following morning, the 21st, his advanced frigate signalled that the enemy were coming out of the harbour. The fact was that for the past two days Napoleon in his last sanguine moments had been telegraphing to Ganteaume the most peremptory orders to get out of Brest and anchor outside in the fortified anchorage of Bertheaume, so as to be ready to put to sea the moment Villeneuve was signalled.¹ It was an order that had to be obeyed, and Ganteaume was now carrying it out. Without a moment's hesitation Cornwallis stood in with his whole squadron, and finding the French lying in disorder across the mouth of the port, he boldly anchored for the night close in off the Black Rocks, determined to attack in the morning in spite of the batteries. Surely it was not the resolution of a man who would run away from a force even twice his strength. At daybreak both fleets weighed and formed battle order. As they stood for one another it looked as if Ganteaume meant to accept battle, but just before he came within gunshot he tacked and held back again. Cornwallis made a desperate attempt to close and cut off his rearmost ships, but the tremendous fire of the batteries rendered it impossible, and he was forced to retire. He had led the attempt in person, and was wounded by a spent fragment of shell, a fact which the tough old admiral did not think worth mentioning in his despatch. The loss incurred was trifling—the gain was the moral effect in checking any attempt of Ganteaume's to exercise his fleet, and to render still more hopeless the prospect of his being able to make any move to join hands with Villeneuve should he appear.

Meanwhile Villeneuve held on his course apparently something north of west, as the *Iris* had reported.² As he

¹ To Decrès and to Ganteaume (by telegraph), August 21st: *Correspondance*, xi 105-6.

² His course is very doubtful. He and all the authorities, including Escaño, say it was W.N.W. on a N.E. wind. But Reille says the noon position

dropped Ferrol, everything was confirming his conviction that an enemy's fleet was watching him. The various British cruisers, together with the *Dragon*, which, delayed on her way to the Finisterre rendezvous by the recent westerly winds, was then passing some thirty miles to the north of him, had been magnified by his scouts into two of the line and two frigates, and were assumed to be the inshore squadron of a blockading fleet; and to confirm this view fourteen sail had been reported to Villeneuve, apparently by a mistaken signal in the north-east.¹ Then eight more were signalled in the north-west, but on examination they proved to be neutrals.² Then at last he spread his wings to the increasing north-east wind and left Ferrol fairly to leeward; but even so, he was not to shake off the spectre that haunted him.

On the 13th, it will be remembered, Captain Griffith in

of the 15th was about 40 leagues W.N.W. of Finisterre, that is, about 55 leagues W. of Ferrol. One means of reconciling this position with the course given is to assume that the positions are "true" and the courses "magnetic." The variation about Finisterre in 1805 was about 22½ west (see *Log of the Victory*, August 13th-16th, where Hardy observed it each day, varying from 22° 35' W. in long., 118° and 23° 15' in long., 12° to 22° 49' in long. 11°). Therefore a "magnetic" course W.N.W. would give a "true" course just about W. A further corroboration that this was the actual course is that it led direct to Allemand's first rendezvous. Villeneuve gives the evening position as 80 leagues W.N.W. of Finisterre; but it is, of course, impossible for him to have covered the distance in the time. Another explanation is, that although he was steering about W.N.W., the combined effects of the leeway and drift of the Portuguese branch of the Biscay current setting strongly S.S.E., may have made his actual course about W. In any case, he cannot have got so far north of the latitude of Ferrol as he is represented in the French staff map (Desbrière, iv. 782), for after turning south he was off Cadiz in eighty hours. It was a run of 550 miles from the latitude of Ferrol (say sixty leagues west), giving a speed of seven knots, which is the utmost his fleet could have done, as he had to wait occasionally for laggards.

¹ There is no trace of these vessels in the reports of the British cruisers which were then to the north-east of him.

² Colonel Desbrière is of opinion these eight sail were "certainly Allemand." But Reille says that all of them that were examined were neutrals. At 2 o'clock A.M. on the 14th, Villeneuve was tacking under Cape Prior; at 4 o'clock Allemand saw three suspicious sail to the N.E., and Colonel Desbrière thinks these were some of Villeneuve's cruisers. But Allemand says he was then in 45° 39' N., 13° 31' W. (i.e. 11° 11' Greenwich), which was about 150 miles N.W. of Cape Prior: *Projets*, iv. 783; *Trafalgar*, 100.

the *Dragon*, proceeding from Calder on his mission to get into touch with Nelson, had met the *Phœnix* towing the *Didon*, and had turned her back. In company they were steering for the Finisterre rendezvous, when next day about two in the afternoon the *Dragon* boarded a Dane bound for Hamburg. With a view probably of covering the *Phœnix* and her prize, Captain Griffith informed the skipper that he was part of a fleet of twenty-five of the line; and to increase the impression, when he let the Dane go, he played the old trick of making imaginary signals to a distant admiral. Scarcely had he completed his performance when he was aware of a strange fleet in the east-south-east. For an hour or so he watched them, while an advanced frigate came up to observe him. About six o'clock, to his great satisfaction, he saw her board the Dane he had hoaxed and then hurry off to join her fleet. The sun was just setting, but before it was too dark he was able to count twenty-six sail standing, as it seemed, about north-westward.¹ Whereupon he and his consorts turned to the southward away from the danger with all reefs out. Next morning nothing was in sight. So dismissing the *Phœnix* and her prize to make the best of their way to Gibraltar, Griffith hauled his wind, presumably with the intention of getting touch again with the fleet he had sighted.²

Meanwhile, in the early hours of the 15th, Villeneuve had received the report of the cruiser that had sighted the British ships and boarded the Dane. Villeneuve himself says nothing in his despatch of the false news that had been obtained. All we know is that, although the prize which the frigate had seen in the possession of the *Dragon* and *Phœnix*, was believed to be the *Didon*, the Admiral

¹ In this Captain Griffith may well have been mistaken. It was nearly dark, and he himself apparently was not seen by the fleet at all.

² *Log of the Dragon* (Griffith's). James (iii. 374) is the authority for Griffith's trick. Lauriston to the Emperor, August 21st: Desbrière, *Trafalgar, App.*, p. 107.

would make no attempt to rescue her. He simply held on as he was, straight for Allemand's first rendezvous, on the chance apparently that he might have returned there. At noon he was close upon it, but of Allemand there was no sign.¹ Yet in fact they had been within an ace of running into one another. At daybreak Allemand on his way to Vigo found himself between that port and Finisterre.² By yet another of the fantastic chances of his cruise he must therefore have crossed Villeneuve's track close astern of him in the night, both being possibly without lights, and neither had seen the other. Allemand, however, now got tidings from a neutral that Villeneuve had been to Vigo, and thither he hurried in hope of getting definite instructions.

As for Villeneuve, he continued to push west further and further from his lost colleague. Whatever his original intention on leaving Ferrol, there can be little doubt he had now made up his mind what to do. Neutrals visited had confirmed his worst fears. "It appears," says Lauriston, "by all the reports which various ships made to us since leaving Coruña, that Nelson has gone north, having heard of our putting into Vigo, and without doubt after making his junction with Calder."³ After all his sanguine master's efforts to disperse the British fleet—the fundamental condition of success—it was clear to him it was more closely concentrated than ever, while his own concentration had failed. The consensus of all the intelligence confirmed the hopelessness of his getting touch with Allemand. If he went north in accordance with Napoleon's plan he must go with what he already had, and what he had was a fleet only in name. The movement from Ferrol had proved it to

¹ Journal de Reille. "A midi . . . 40 lieues Ouest-nord-ouest du Cap Finisterre": Desbrière, *Projets*, iv. 785. It is this position that fixes Villeneuve's mean course from Ferrol as due west true.

² Allemand's Journal: *Ibid.*, 784.

³ Desbrière, *Trafalgar*, App., p. 108, August 21st.

be a mere mass of ill-assorted units incapable of acting as a squadron at all. To proceed was madness. The whole plan of campaign had obviously broken down. In his orders of July 16th, which had reached him at Ferrol and under which he was now operating, there was the following proviso: "The Emperor has kept in mind the case in which by eventualities impossible to calculate the situation of the fleet would not permit you to undertake the execution of his plans which would have so great an influence on the fate of the world, and in this case only the Emperor desires to concentrate at Cadiz a mass of imposing force."¹ In Villeneuve's eyes the case had arisen. The enemy, as he explained in justifying his move, had obviously penetrated the Emperor's plan, and it had failed. "Their concentration of force," he said, "was at the moment more serious than in any previous disposition, and such that they were in a position to meet in superiority the combined forces of Brest and Ferrol." Added to this a stormy wind had been blowing for two days from the north-east; it was likely to continue, and he dared not hold his ill-found ships against it. Till nightfall, therefore, he held on as he was, and when darkness came to shroud his movement he turned back to Cadiz.

What Gravina thought of it we cannot tell. Escaño, his chief-of-the-staff, loyally draws a veil over it all without a word of comment. That day and the three that followed he enters all together in his journal. "In these days," he says, "there occurred nothing more noteworthy than the capture of a merchant vessel, which was burnt. We chased all craft that were sighted, and pursued our course down the coasts of Galicia and Portugal."² Nothing more noteworthy than a merchantman burnt! The pathetic loyalty of that entry! For every man knew that what had

¹ Desbrière, iv. 646.

² Desbrière, *Trafalgar*, App., p. 7.

happened was no less than that the whole initiative was being surrendered to the enemy, and no one could see there was any help for it. "The captains," wrote Lauriston to the Emperor, "have no heart left to do well. Attention is no longer paid to signals, which are kept flying on the masts two or three hours. Discipline is completely gone."¹

His movement to the southward was not observed by any British cruiser, but ahead of him was the *Iris* speeding down to Collingwood to carry warning of what was likely to happen, and spreading the news far and wide as she went. Early on the 15th, just before she reached Finisterre, she had fallen in with Sir William Parker in the *Amazon*, whom Nelson had sent on ahead of him off Ferrol for intelligence. His orders were, if he judged Nelson had not gone there, to proceed off Ushant or Ireland. Hearing the *Iris's* intelligence, and that the *Naiad* was taking it to Ushant, Parker decided to proceed direct to Cork, where he arrived on the 24th, just in time to enable Admiral Drury to stop the East India convoy and Baird's expedition then on the point of sailing.²

Meanwhile, on the 16th, the *Iris* as she held on for Collingwood fell in with Henry Blackwood, king of cruiser captains, in the famous *Euryalus*. His presence there was a curious piece of the Fortune of War. He really belonged to the Irish cruiser squadron. At the end of July, when the attention of the Admiralty had been directed to the Texel and to the possibility of Villeneuve's coming into the North Sea, he had been sent to Drury at Cork to enable him to watch the north coast of Ireland. On his way from Spithead, however, he had got news of Calder's

¹ Desbrière, p. 108. Villeneuve in his report says he turned back at a point 80 leagues W.N.W. of Finisterre, but this is impossible. He could not in seven or eight hours run 120 miles from his noon position.

² *Life of Parker*, i. p. 303. Without anchoring, Parker carried on to Ushant "with a duplicate of the information, should any unforeseen accident have prevented the *Naiad* reaching Admiral Cornwallis."—*Ibid.*, p. 304.

action with the report that it had forced the Combined Squadron to go south to Cadiz. On reaching Cork on August 2nd, he reported this to Drury, who the day before had received an order to inform Nelson immediately at Lagos if any of his ships should succeed in locating Villeneuve. Thinking it was now useless to watch the north coast, Drury took upon himself to send Blackwood straight off the station to find Nelson.¹ It was of course far too late to find him, and on arriving off the Tagus Blackwood heard from Lord Strangford that Nelson had left Lagos, and that he had been seen on August 5th a hundred leagues west of Lisbon standing to the North.² Strangford had also received information of Villeneuve's intentions. A spy of his in the household of the Spanish Ambassador had seen a letter of Gravina's written just after the action, in which he said, with much sarcasm upon his French colleagues, that they meant to go into Cadiz, revictual, and get into the Mediterranean before the British could come up with them.³

Whether this information also was given to Blackwood is uncertain, but he at once turned back in hopes of finding Nelson off Finisterre. So it was he fell in with Captain Brace in the *Iris*, and heard his news, that Villeneuve was out and making to the westward.

It of course altered the whole situation, and Blackwood with characteristic grasp and fearlessness of responsibility at once took it firmly in hand. It was on the *Iris's* intelligence, he says, that he judged Villeneuve's destination after leaving Ferrol must be to the southward, and that he was

¹ For this Drury was reproved by the Admiralty, and told to be more careful how he sent his cruisers on detached service for the future.—*In-letters*, 620, August 2nd, 11th, 14th, 16th.

² This was approximately accurate, but how Strangford knew is not stated.

³ *S.P. Foreign, Portugal*, vol. 47: Strangford to Mulgrave, August 7th. This letter came to hand on September 9th, and was sent to the Admiralty the same day. Endorsed, "Send copy to Lord Nelson": *In-letters, Secretary of State*, 4200.

then somewhere close to him. Alone neither he nor Brace could do anything effective. In such circumstances he felt that cruisers must be coupled, and on this sound principle, as he explained to the Admiralty, he ordered Brace to stay by him. Cruising in company they would try to locate the Combined Fleet, and then if they got touch, the ship which proved to be the faster should shadow it while the slower one carried the information to the Admiral. He further argued that he was no longer under any obligation to find Nelson, for Parker in the *Amazon* had learnt from the *Iris* all he knew himself, and she had gone to Nelson's rendezvous. He therefore decided, after sending his news into Lisbon, to proceed with the *Iris* to Cape St. Vincent, as the only sure point to get touch with the enemy, and wait there forty-eight hours. On the 18th he was off the Cape, and there he heard from a Dane that there was a large fleet to the westward working in towards him. It could only be the Combined Squadron. His way was now clear. He decided at once to stay where he was and shadow Villeneuve, while at the same time he sent off the *Iris* to carry the news to Ireland, and if possible to Cornwallis.¹

It was on the 19th she parted company, three days after Calder had received his orders from Cornwallis to take his half of the fleet to the southward. For two days he had been held close to Ushant with baffling breezes, but now he had caught the north-easter, and was surging across the bay direct for Ferrol with his eighteen of the line. Before him, believing as he did that Allemand must have found Villeneuve, was the prospect of having to encounter nearly twice his own number. But there was no sign of the flinching of which he was to be accused for his recent conduct: no sign of anything but eagerness to be off the port. Early on the morning of the 20th, being then in the

¹ Blackwood to the Admiralty, August 16th and 18th: *Captains' Letters*, 1534. Logs of the *Iris* and *Euryalus*.

middle of the Bay, nearly half-way to his station, he spoke the *Naiad* on her way north to inform Cornwallis that she had seen Villeneuve outside the port, and the prospect grew more serious still. He signalled for all flag-officers, but after a short conference proceeded under a press of sail. His course was now more to the westward, as though to cross his enemy's track if he meant to come north. Later on, however, being still uncertain whether Villeneuve had actually put to sea, he altered it again direct for Ferrol, sending forward the *Attack* gunboat to look into the port, and by noon on the 21st he was on his old station just north-west of Ortegal.¹ Here his first doubt was settled. From a British Cartel ship, which had left Ferrol the day before, he learnt that Villeneuve had been gone a week, and his force was reported as twenty-six of the line. Allemand, therefore, had not joined, but of Villeneuve's destination nothing was known.² An hour later he had fresh light. The *Pickle* met him with information that Allemand had put into Vigo. The obvious inference was that Villeneuve had gone there too, to pick him up, and without more ado Calder bore away to the westward to double Finisterre.

Once more Allemand was in the direst jeopardy. He was, in fact, making straight into Calder's arms. Off Vigo, on the 16th, he had received Villeneuve's orders to look for him at Ferrol, and if he found him gone, then off the Penmarcks on the South Breton coast. Next day, accordingly, he had hurried away, and ever since had been trying to double Finisterre against persistent easterly and north-easterly winds, on which Calder had come down.

¹ *Masters' Logs*, 3673 (*Prince of Wales*). There is no indication of his having had further information when he altered course, but at 11.0 A.M. on the 21st a large convoy of transports was seen, which, being uninjured, was perhaps taken as indication that Villeneuve possibly had turned back. Or his idea may have been to keep more to windward, so as to be able to reach back to Cornwallis if necessary.

² She was the *Trimmer* Cartel. See extract from a letter of Captain Patton, Portsmouth Transport Agent.—*War Office*, i. 712, Aug. 31st: and *Log of the Defence*, Aug. 21st.

While he was thus occupied somewhere off Finisterre there came into Calder's fleet the *Nimble*, who, it will be remembered, after bringing to Cornwallis the first news of Villeneuve's sailing, had been immediately sent back with fresh instructions for Calder. Reaching Ferrol the previous day, she found Calder's scout, the *Attack*, and learning where the Admiral was, had made all sail to him with news she had just obtained from a Portuguese skipper. It was of the last importance. For it told how just a week before Villeneuve had sailed with twenty-nine of the line and ten cruisers, his exact force, and that his course had been west either for Cadiz or San Domingo.¹ Thereupon Calder signalled to bear up, and held on to the westward, still determined to try Vigo before proceeding further. By nine next morning he had doubled Finisterre, and thence he threw forward a chain of cruisers to look into the port. By yet another miracle he saw nothing of Allemand, who must have been close by to seaward of him. At all events four days later the phantom squadron made the Sisargas Islands, and next day, finding Villeneuve had left Ferrol, Allemand held away north to meet him off the Penmarcks.

In the evening Calder's cruisers reported that the Rochefort squadron had left Vigo four days previously, sailing north, and at the same time another cruiser, the *Poulette*, came in, who reported she had been down to Cadiz in search of Nelson, and had been sent back by Collingwood a fortnight since. In all that time she had seen nothing of Villeneuve, but thought it quite possible that she had passed him in the night, and that he might be to the southward. Here then for Calder was a problem of peculiar anxiety, little less exacting, indeed, than that

¹ *Log of the Nimble*, Calder to Cornwallis, August 22nd: *In-letters*, 129. Napoleon was at the time trying to organise an expedition to relieve San Domingo which Villeneuve had left besieged by the black insurgents. Napoleon to Decrès, August 5th: *Correspondance*, xi. 63.

which Cornwallis had just had to decide. Had Villeneuve gone north or south? Allemand's reported course—the only certain news—must have suggested the north, but then nothing had been seen of him. Probably it was this persuaded Calder that his own intuition must be correct, and he boldly decided to go south. His explanation to Cornwallis was this. Having no certain news of the enemy, he had resolved to bear along the coast for St. Vincent and Cadiz. There he expected to find Collingwood if the enemy had not passed that way. If they had, and Collingwood had been driven off, he would have left a rendezvous, where he would endeavour to join him. "If they have not gone south," he said, "I assume Admiral Collingwood [who was his senior] will approve my joining you off Ushant."

All next day he held on, having sent a cruiser ahead to Lisbon for intelligence, and early on the 24th his anxiety was at an end. A cutter came in from the ever active Consul Gambier, with information that left no doubt that Villeneuve was in Cadiz. Once more the flag-officers were called to council, and then away they sped to lock the door.¹

The news was true enough. By sunset, twenty leagues short of Cape St. Vincent, Calder had the whole story from the *Euryalus*. As Blackwood had expected, he had got touch with the Combined Fleet within a few hours of sending the *Iris* away. He had been severely chased, but refused to be shaken off. Though he escaped capture, he found it impossible to get through the scattered throng of ships to inform Collingwood. He was, however, able to warn the *Phoenix*, for whom there was still no rest, and she turned north again for England with her prize.

Collingwood therefore came near to being taken by

¹ Calder to Cornwallis, Aug. 24th: *In-letters*, 129, and *Log of the Prince of Wales*.

surprise at anchor before Cadiz. "I must tell you," he wrote to his wife on the 21st, "what a squeeze we had like to have got yesterday. While we were cruising off the town, down came the Combined Fleet of 36 sail of men-of-war. We were only three poor things with a frigate and a bomb, and drew off towards the Straits."¹ Still he had had two days' warning of what to expect, probably from Gambier. He was dreaming of his family and his domain—"the oaks, the woodlands, and the verdant meads"—but he was ready. His idea was to keep the Straits open so as to be able to fall back on Bickerton at Cartagena and his own fourth ship at Tangier, and force anything that pursued him to pass the Straits. But in truth he was in little danger, so low had the spirit of his enemy sunk. The spectre of Nelson's unlocated fleet was still haunting the Admiral, and his cruisers, mistaking signals, kept sending in confused reports of squadrons in the vicinity. At the last moment they told how a Swede had recently seen eight vessels within the Straits and twelve more at Gibraltar, besides the three before Cadiz. "It is Nelson," cried Villeneuve, "who is there with twenty-three of the line." Fearing an immediate attack on his cumbrous fleet, his only idea was to get it into safety as soon as possible. Gravina with the light squadron made a push to cut off Collingwood, but he was soon recalled, and on the 20th the whole fleet ignominiously re-entered Cadiz.

Next day, to complete the exasperation of the French and Spanish captains, Collingwood quietly resumed his station before the port. It was a fine resolution, especially when contrasted with that of Orde. But it would be unjust to regard the two cases as identical. Orde had to deal with a fresh squadron at the outset of a great adventure; before Collingwood was an exhausted force that had failed in its mission, and was in retreat. Somewhere to the north must

¹ *Blockade of Brest*, ii. 356 n.; *Life of Collingwood*, 96.

be a fleet which had headed it back, and that fleet must soon be on its way to support him. Still, without disparaging Orde, high praise must be given to Collingwood. He at least could only guess how demoralised his enemy was, and he expected them to sail again at once. "They are gone into Cadiz," he wrote to Gambier on the 20th, "for the purpose of replenishing their ships, and are expected to sail again soon, reinforced by eight from that port." And again next day to his wife: "We have been looking into Cadiz, where their fleet is now as thick as a wood. I hope I shall have somebody come to me soon, and in the meantime I must take the best care of myself I can." He had not long to wait. The moment Bickerton heard what had happened, though he himself was sick ashore, he abandoned his watch on Cartagena and sent his ships to join his chief. By the 28th the two squadrons were together off Cadiz, and two days later Calder appeared.

So ended the *insigne bêtise*. Instead of waiting tamely on the defensive, Barham and his colleagues by sheer boldness and sagacious penetration had secured both Channel and Mediterranean. They had refused to play into Napoleon's hands. Whatever his game might be they had it in hand, so far as it was possible for the fleet to hold it. What he had to do must now be done with his army alone. His whole fleet—with the exception of Allemand's little lost squadron—was in fetters, and the great crisis was at an end.

CHAPTER XIX

THE RETURN TO THE OFFENSIVE

THE campaign was now transformed. As between France and England, England had regained the initiative. In technical phrase, "an offensive return" was open to her. It was hers to attack, while France, so far as England was concerned, was forced back upon the defensive. It was the situation for which Pitt had been working with so much quiet perseverance ever since he came to power—the situation which Napoleon had never yet taken into account. As all the world knows, the way he eventually dealt with it was magnificent—the crowning exploit of his military career, but his recognition of the situation was slow and stubborn. The shock to his pride and his prestige was so severe as to upset his equilibrium—to blind him with savage exasperation—and in passionate rebellion at the treachery of his Star, he refused to admit that Pitt had beaten him. For three fevered weeks—just the three weeks in which Nelson was taking his uneasy rest ashore—he struggled against the humiliating truth. When at last he faced it, he saw Europe a live magazine beneath his feet; and Pitt, instead of cowering before him as he thought, was secretly stretching out a linstock to explode it. Then in his heroic recklessness of means he arose, and in a desperate effort to quench the insidious flame he flung away his fleet. That in a word is the dramatic conclusion we have yet to trace.

It was not till August 22nd that Napoleon knew that

the Combined Fleet had come out from Corufia, and that his fierce denunciations of his Admiral for unreasonable delay were unjustified. Once more he was sanguine, or at least desperate. Clinging stubbornly to the belief that it was still possible that Villeneuve might be coming on to Brest, he telegraphed to Ganteaume that he was not to permit him to enter the port to re-victual. He himself was to put to sea immediately his colleague was signalled, and taking the whole force under his command was to proceed up Channel without a moment's delay. At the same time Decrès was directed to inform Villeneuve that if after all he did go to Cadiz he was forthwith to get on board two months' supplies and come north without a moment's delay.

They were surely counsels of despair, but he had caught the first glimpse of Pitt's linstock. Till that moment he seems to have had no doubt that his truculent menaces would avail to keep Austria and Russia quiet. But now he learned that Craig had reached Malta with 6000 troops and was already in close communication with the two Russian Generals, Lacy at Naples and Anrep at Corfu. Trivial as was the force, it had for Napoleon a significance that was not to be measured by its numbers. There were reasons why it gave a fresh colour of seriousness to the Austrian mobilisation which he had fully expected to see dissolve at his demand as it had done earlier in the year. It was clear some further emphasis must be sought to give weight to his threat. As a counterpoise to the pressure which Russia was exerting on Berlin, he had already taken the cynical step of offering Hanover to Prussia as the price of her support; and he now suddenly demanded an immediate answer.¹ Accordingly on the very day when the

¹ The connection between these two events is only a matter of conjecture, for it is not clear at what time exactly Napoleon heard of Craig's being at Malta. He arrived on July 19th. Elliot heard of it at Naples on August

arrival of Villeneuve's despatches from Ferrol had left the whole situation in uncertainty he gave peremptory instructions that the King must be told to make his choice at once. If he accepted "the present" Napoleon offered, so the ambassador was instructed to say, and it had the effect of overawing Russia and Austria and setting his hands free for the maritime war, he would be content. But the offer could only stand for a fortnight. Once he struck his Ocean camp he could not stop, and it would be too late. The maritime war-plan would have failed, and the Prussian diversion not be worth the price.¹

Whatever the connection of this cold-blooded stroke of diplomacy with British military movements, it is certain that they were causing Napoleon some uneasiness. The old law which gives to such expeditions as Craig's a disturbing power out of all proportion to their intrinsic force, was beginning to work—the old law which Frederick the Great and the Elder Pitt had understood so well. It was in the power of Craig to secure a foothold at Napoleon's weakest point, and it was impossible to tell what was behind the little advanced guard. Baird was on the point of sailing to the southward, but whither, the Emperor knew not. Nor was this all. Since the end of July, Pitt had been preparing on his father's principle to have in readiness a much larger force, "either to menace or attack the enemy or their maritime frontiers." Castlereagh thought it might be made up perhaps to 35,000 infantry and 10,000 cavalry, and that meanwhile without any prejudice to internal defence a corps of 10,000 men might be concentrated in the neighbourhood of Portsmouth and Cork, with a suffi-

1st (Auriol, i. 387). On Aug. 8th the French Ambassador at Berlin made the offer of Hanover. St. Cyr wrote on the subject on Aug. 15th, but only as news which he had sent some time before: *Ibid*, 398. The first reference in Napoleon's correspondence is on Aug. 19th, when he had already ordered St. Cyr to be reinforced.

¹ To Talleyrand, Aug. 22nd: *Correspondance*, xi. 107.

ciency of transports standing by in constant readiness and fully equipped and victualled for foreign service.¹

It was an old device. Napoleon himself was even then endeavouring to use it with Marmont's corps and the Dutch transports in the Texel, and yet so certain is its power of disturbance that even he found it could not be ignored. "Monsieur Talleyrand," he wrote the day after he sent his peremptory demand to Berlin, "the more I reflect on the situation of Europe the more I see it is urgent to take a decisive line. I have, in reality, nothing to expect from Austria's explanation. She will only reply with fair phrases, and gain time to prevent my doing anything this winter. . . . and in April I shall find 100,000 Russians in Poland, supplied by England with equipment, horses, artillery, &c., and 15,000 to 20,000 English at Malta, and 15,000 Russians at Corfu. I shall then find myself in a critical situation. My decision is made."²

Even so, he still clung or pretended to cling to the hope of Villeneuve's appearing at the eleventh hour. "If he follows his instructions," the letter went on, "joins the Brest squadron, and enters the Channel, there is still time; I am master of England. If, on the contrary, my Admirals hesitate . . . I have no other resource than to wait for winter to cross with the flotilla. . . . In this state of affairs . . . I run to the most pressing. I strike my camps and replace my war battalions by my third battalions, which will still give me a sufficiently formidable army at Boulogne." Finally Talleyrand was told to prepare a manifesto as a declaration of war against Austria, but it was not to be issued. By keeping it secret till the last moment, Napoleon meant to gain a fortnight on his enemy.

The truth is he had received from Decrès a protest which

¹ *Correspondence of Castlereagh*. To the Duke of York, July 26th, vol. II. p. 6.

² *Correspondance*, xi. 117, Aug. 23rd.

put the arrival of the Combined Fleet beyond the pale of possibility. The harassed Minister did not doubt that Villeneuve had gone to Cadiz, and he could not bring himself to forward him the order to come back with the Spanish squadrons in Cadiz and Cartagena. At last his master's extravagancies had stung him to something like rebellion for the sake of his own maltreated service. "At your Majesty's feet," he wrote, "I implore you not to associate Spanish vessels with your squadrons. . . . I know no situation more painful than my own. I beg your Majesty will consider that I have no interest but that of your flag and the honour of your arms. If your fleet is at Cadiz, I implore you to regard this event as a decree of destiny, which is reserving you for other operations. I implore you not to make it come back from Cadiz into the Channel. . . . I implore you, above all, not to order it to attempt this voyage with two months' victuals, because Monsieur d'Estaing took, I think, seventy or eighty days coming from Cadiz to Brest, and perhaps more.¹ It is above all at this moment—when I may stop the issue of orders fatal, as I think, to your Majesty's service—that I ought to insist strongly. Would that I might be more successful in this case than I have been before! But it is misery for me to know the trade of the sea, for this knowledge wins no confidence nor produces any effect on your Majesty's plans. Indeed, Sire, my position is becoming too painful. I reproach myself for being unable to persuade your Majesty. I doubt if any one man could. May it please you, for naval operations, to form about you a council, a naval staff—such as may seem fit to your Majesty. . . . A Minister of Marine,

¹ August 22nd, Desbrière, iv. 814. The occasion referred to must be the great but impotent concentration of the Franco-Spanish forces at Cadiz in the autumn of 1780. D'Estaing put to sea on November 6th and anchored at Brest on January 3, 1781. He spent some time cruising off Cape St. Vincent, and his actual passage thence to Brest was fifty-eight days. See Lacour-Gayet, *Marine sous Louis XVI.*, p. 322.

dominated by your Majesty in all that concerns the sea, must serve you ill and become as nothing for the glory of your arms, if even he does not become harmful."

A letter so loyal, so wise, so broken-hearted, even Napoleon could not ignore. It was probably this which turned the scale, heavily weighted as it already was. On the morrow the routes for Vienna were issued to Marshal Berthier, and on the 25th Napoleon informed Talleyrand that all was over with the invasion. As yet the failure was not laid at Villeneuve's door, but frankly on his own misjudgment of the military and political situation. "I could not have believed the Austrians so stiff," he said; "but I have been so often mistaken in my life that I no longer blush for it."¹

Though Napoleon's front was now definitely facing to the eastward, he himself stood fast at Boulogne. The movement had to be masked. A fortnight had to be gained before Austria's suspicions should be aroused, and, further, there was his rear to secure. He had at last to face the fact that England was no longer on the defensive; her army was free to attack, and so soon as all was in order for his change of front he began to give it serious attention.

Berthier received the marching orders on August 26th, and next day Talleyrand was told to extend his Naval Intelligence Department to the British land forces. The head of the department was "to keep a box with divisions for all the movements of the English army, including the artillery, and reserving places for the movements of the generals and staff officers;" and as soon as it was ready he was to send him a travelling duplicate for his own use.² During the next few days he was much concerned with the subject, making arrangements to prevent a descent at Boulogne for the destruction of the flotilla, and bidding

¹ *Correspondance*, xi. p. 134.

² *Ibid.*, 146, Aug. 27.

Marmont before marching eastward to assure the Dutch that this same army could be moved rapidly to their defence if they were attacked from the sea in his absence. Duroc, the Envoy who had just been sent to Berlin to force the King of Prussia to a decision, was told that Napoleon did not care much whether he got rid of Hanover or not. If Prussia refused it, he would merely garrison Hameln with 3000 men, and he was in hopes that he would bring 30,000 or 40,000 English to besiege it. "Frederick," he said, significantly, "did not take long to get from Prague to Rosbach."¹ Forty thousand men, almost exactly Castlereagh's figure, was the force which he calculated England might have at her disposal.² Napoleon must have put the British disposal force at a lower strength, for he fixed the Boulogne defence army at 25,000 men, with officers and cadres enough besides to form the flotilla crews into regiments. "The English," he told Berthier, "will then be unable to attempt anything with less than 40,000 men."³

It was in the midst of these preoccupations that he heard from London for the first time of the division of Cornwallis's fleet and gave vent to his angry criticism. Not only had he failed to scatter the British fleet when he did not want it to concentrate, but he had failed to force it to keep concentrated when he least of all wished to see it spread. He saw himself outwitted by the seamen he despised, and his only relief was to call them egregious blunderers, and to begin to pretend to himself that the fault was all Villeneuve's for missing so grand a chance. Yet we can now see that if Villeneuve had come north at

¹ *Correspondance*, xi. 157, Aug. 28.

² *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 6, and see *ante*, p. 304. There is a similar undated "Memorandum for moving the disposable force" in the *Pitt Papers*, Bundle 243. It shows 45,000 foot, 6700 artillery, and 12,000 cavalry, requiring 308,000 tons of transport at 1½ tons per man. On Russia's suggestion that peace might be made with Spain, Pitt was already contemplating the possibility of using this force on the Peninsular. See *Appendix B*, p. 486.

³ *Correspondance*, xi. p. 159, Aug. 29.

once on reaching Ferrol, as Napoleon wished, he would have fallen into the arms of the complete British concentration. If, on the other hand, he had come north after the division and had got into the Channel by evasion, he would have found no army at Boulogne. It was not even till two days after the order for demobilising the flotilla that Napoleon knew Villeneuve was in Cadiz. The decision to attack Austria before she was ready had been taken a week earlier and quite independently of whether his fleet would come to Brest or not.

It was on September 1st the news reached him that Villeneuve had actually retired to Cadiz,¹ and that same evening the *Euryalus* was heaving-to off the Needles. Blackwood had brought up his tidings in ten days from St. Vincent, and that not a moment might be lost he left his ship outside the Solent and went ashore at Lymington. Thence he took a chaise and four and galloped through the night, rousing Nelson at Merton in the early morning with his stirring news, as he passed on his way to the Admiralty.²

To the Government he brought welcome relief from a period of strained anxiety. For what he had to tell was not only that Villeneuve was in Cadiz, but also—and this Napoleon did not yet know—that Calder had locked the door upon him. It will be recalled that the most pressing anxiety which the partial success of the French plan had caused the Government was not so much for the invasion, which they considered they had well in hand, as for the military expeditions and the home-coming convoys. The concentration at Ferrol placed them in immediate danger and the apprehension was seriously increased by Villeneuve's hasty sailing for Coruña before he could have re-victualled. The course he had steered to the westward

¹ To Duroc (Postscript), *Correspondance*, xi. 157.

² Blackwood to the Admiralty: *Captains' Letters*, 1534. He submitted a bill for £15, 19s. 0d. for his journey, which was allowed. The telegraph, of course, could not be used at night or in thick weather.

threatened a dash at the East Indiamen. Or if this were not so, still they might be the objective of Allemand. They were a source of more than usual anxiety. Not only was the convoy extraordinarily rich, but in the *Trident* 64, its escort ship, were two men the country could ill afford to lose. One was Admiral Rainier, who was coming home in command after being relieved on the station by Sir Edward Pellew. The other was a passenger—no less a man than Sir Arthur Wellesley returning from his brilliant campaign against the Mahrattas, the campaign which had removed all fear of effective French interference in India. A secret route had been sent out to meet them at St. Helena, but none the less the danger was disturbing.¹

The capture of this priceless convoy would mean not only the loss of a brilliant soldier but a disastrous blow to the national finance, and commercial and family influence alike demanded that it must be secured at any cost. So great indeed was the anxiety that on August 27th, when as yet there was no certainty that Napoleon had abandoned the invasion, Cornwallis was told that so soon as he was strong enough he would have to detach a division of four or five of the line a hundred leagues west-south-west of Scilly in order to receive the threatened Trade. Calder had already been directed to cover its arrival, if he found Villeneuve and Allemand seemed to be making it their objective; and Cornwallis's new instructions provided that if the detachment found Calder operating to this end it was to consider itself under his orders.²

¹ Rainier left Madras with Wellesley on March 10th, and reached St. Helena, the great Southern convoy rendezvous, on June 21st. Here they were joined by the China ships and some whalers, making twenty-nine sail, which were valued at £15,000,000. Varying at his own discretion the Admiralty instructions, he sailed again on July 12th after forcing certain neutrals to remain behind anchored under the fort guns for fear of their betraying his route.—Rainier to Marsden. "Off the Start, Sept. 8": *In-letters*, 176; and *Log of the Trident*. For the secret route see *post*, p. 336, note 2.

² *Secret Orders*, August 27th: *Barham Papers*, iii. 279, Aug. 28th.

It was on this burning question—the real objective and the whereabouts of the Combined Fleet—that Nelson was most eagerly consulted by the Ministers when he reached London. He had struck his flag on the evening of August 19th in grave anxiety as to what his reception would be. In his own eyes he had failed and been outwitted. He was soon reassured. His heroic dash to save the West Indies had reawakened all the old enthusiasm for the hero of the Nile and Copenhagen. At Portsmouth he had met an ovation, and by the time he reached London it was unrestrained adulation. So extravagant did it grow that the more sober spirits felt called upon to protest. "Should the mad project of invasion," wrote the editor of the *Naval Chronicle*, "ever be attempted, the public would feel additional security from having the hero of the Nile on our coast. But we greatly lament that ill-judged and overweening popularity which tends to make another 'demi-god' of Lord Nelson at the expense of all other officers in the service, many of whom possess equal merit, and equal abilities, and equal gallantry with the noble Admiral."¹

But nothing could stem the tide. People, city, and Ministers were all at one, and Nelson to his no small discomfort found himself regarded as a magician, as though he were in possession of Drake's fabled mirror in which he could see "all the movements of the enemy's ships, all that passed in them, and count their crews." On August 23rd, his first day in London, he saw both Castlereagh and Pitt, and found them "full of the enemy's fleet," and expecting him to say where it was. "I am now set up for a conjurer," he wrote next day to Keats of the *Superb*, his most trusted counsellor, who had come ashore with him; "and God knows they will very soon find I am far from being one. I was asked my opinion against my inclination, for if I make one wrong guess the charm will be broken."

¹ Vol. xiv. 157.

Barham alone held aloof. The two great seamen hardly knew one another, and to the First Lord's cold, hard-headed intellect there must have been something antagonistic in Nelson's full-coloured genius. It is probable that, in common with many others, he regarded him as a poseur, whose vanity was wont to make the most of his achievements, and whose impulsive nature—for so it seemed on the surface—was not to be relied on in a vital crisis. The crucial question was, of course, whom should he entrust with the Mediterranean command. There the naval interest now centred with acute emphasis. Nelson with his rich experience was, of course, the natural choice; but Barham clearly shared Nelson's own doubts as to whether his recent conduct had been as well considered as it might have been, and the national hero was met on landing with a cold request to send up his Journal. Nelson in reply submitted that he did not know such a thing was expected of a Commander-in-chief. But he had kept one for the two periods of his chase, and this he sent up—and with quick effect. "Lord Barham," we are told on the best authority, "on receiving . . . Lord Nelson's Journals, perused the whole narrative with an attention which enabled that Minister to form a more complete idea of the Admiral's character; and Lord Barham afterwards liberally declared he had not before sufficiently appreciated such extraordinary talents. This opinion of the noble Admiral's late proceedings was immediately communicated to the Cabinet with an assurance from Lord Barham that an unbounded confidence ought to be placed in Nelson, who was, above all others, the officer to be employed on the station he had so ably watched, and whose political relations he had so thoroughly understood."¹

¹ Clarke and M'Arthur, ii. 116. This copy of the Journal is in the Record Office with its covering letter to Marsden, which appears never to have been printed. It is as follows: "Merton, August (*sic*) 1805. In answer to your letter of the 19th requesting, by direction of the Lords Commissioners of the

From this moment he was treated frankly as the man of the hour—the embodiment of the policy of a bold counter-attack in the Mediterranean into which Pitt's war direction had ripened. Barham consulted him freely on the naval requirements, and this occupied the greater part of his time, and was fruitful, as we shall see, in new developments. But to the Ministers his political knowledge was of equal value. Our relations on the Continent were still in the greatest uncertainty. A week before Nelson landed, a King's Messenger had arrived from St. Petersburg. In his last despatch Gower had led Pitt to expect an announcement that the Russian treaty had been ratified. But now he could only tell that the Czar was still hanging back. At St. Petersburg they had been pressing him further on the question of Malta and the Maritime Code, but he had firmly refused even to discuss the points. The Minister had then hinted at the prospect of mediation being resumed. Gower, however, was unmoved, and assured his Government that the treaty would probably be ratified in a few days without the mediation article. His hopes of Austria were still more sanguine. The Czar had been assured she had definitely decided to take action at once, so as not to leave the choice of time to Napoleon, and it was said she had already concerted a plan of campaign with Russia. Under this arrangement, as communicated to Gower, 55,000 Russians were to enter Galicia in the middle of August, and in two months they would be in line with an Austrian army on the frontier of Bavaria. It was calculated—and most unhappily calculated—that this

Admiralty, that I will transmit you a journal of my proceedings for their information, I beg leave to acquaint you that never having been called upon (or understanding it to be customary) as Commander-in-chief to furnish their Lordships with a journal of my proceedings, none has been kept for that purpose, except for the different periods the fleet under my command was in pursuit of the enemy, from the 19th of January 1805 till the 12th of March following, and from the 4th of April till the 20th instant, which I herewith transmit for the information of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty."

would enable them to anticipate Napoleon by twenty days. The Archduke Charles was to command the allied army without interference from Vienna.¹

All this was well so far as it went, but there was nothing yet on which Pitt could build securely. By the time, however, that Nelson reached London the position had become more stable. Gower, as he expected, had been able to announce the ratification of the treaty, and that concerted action was opening. The Russians were to commence their march through Austria on August 20th, and a force of 16,000 men for Stralsund was only awaiting transport. For its support they begged that the Hanoverian troops in England should be sent to join it, and that the British Government would hasten to come to terms with Sweden as to the amount of her subsidy.²

Clearly, then, the time for drastic action on the other flank of the French had come. But unfortunately the situation in Southern Italy was in the last degree precarious, and here Nelson's intimate knowledge was a godsend. The difficulty was that nothing was as yet known as to the arrangements Elliot had been able to make with the Russian Generals for co-operation with Craig. It was not even known whether Craig had reached Malta.³ The last information from Elliot was that an envoy had arrived from Paris who, with ruthless brutality, was trying to brow-beat the Neapolitan court into a recognition of Napoleon's new title. At any moment they might give way, and Lacy, the Russian General, wanted to have his troops brought

¹ Gower to Mulgrave, July 21st and 22nd, received Aug. 12th: *F. O. Russia*, 58. Printed by Holland Rose, *Third Coalition*, pp. 188-93.

² Gower to Mulgrave, July 31st (two despatches), received August 23rd: *Ibid.*

³ It was not till Sept. 3rd that the Admiralty informed Ministers that Bickerton had seen him as far as Cape Bona with a fair wind.—*War Office*, i. 712. On Aug. 1st, Elliot had written fully of his arrival and the co-operation of the Russians, but though he specially sent the letter to Rome to be forwarded by post overland it did not come to hand till "Sept. 17th at night."—*Foreign Office, Sicily*, 25.

over from Corfu immediately. He was urgently pressing for Craig's co-operation, but not a word had been heard from him.¹

It was quite possible, therefore, that under Napoleon's violent pressure the feeble resistance of Naples might break down, and Craig, even if he arrived in time, might find the moment had come for a forcible and adverse occupation of Messina to save Sicily from the wreck of the Neapolitan kingdom. Seeing how long Nelson had been pressing for troops to meet this very situation, he naturally became anxious to know how Craig's force was to be used, but Castlereagh could not yet give him a definite answer. "As the man said of the Parson," Nelson wrote to Ball, "he preached about doing good, and so Ministers talked of our troops doing good to the Common Cause." In the turbid mist that shrouded the situation Nelson clung to his old idea of securing Sardinia as the key of the difficulty. So long as he had that island for a base, he was sure he could place Sicily beyond Napoleon's reach.²

He was listened to with respect, and indeed was eventually furnished with means to the amount of £40,000 for the organisation of the Sardinian forces in case of need. The point just then received new emphasis. On September 1st came another despatch from Gower, saying that Austria had authorised a plenipotentiary to sign her adhesion to the Coalition, but she was making all kinds of difficulties over details. With her appetite for Northern Italy unassuaged, she made special objection to the restoration of the King of Sardinia as a term of the ultimate settlement of Europe. She also wished, in spite of the recent Russian experience, to try mediation as a means to her end before committing

¹ Elliot to Mulgrave, July 9th and 16th, received August 14th and 22nd: *F. O. Sicily*, 25.

² Nelson to Pitt, 6 a.m., Aug. 29th, and same to Lord Minto, Aug. 31st: *Nicolas*, vii. 20, 25. Castlereagh to Nelson, Sept. —: *Castlereagh's Letters and Despatches*, 2nd series, i. 88. Nelson to Ball, Sept. 30th: *Nicolas*, vii. 55.

herself to actual hostilities; but nevertheless she expected Pitt to commence paying her subsidy at once. Naturally Gower had refused, and he now warned Mulgrave that the character of the Austrian Court was so weak and vacillating that, unless she could be forced to commit herself during a momentary fit of vigour, she was not to be trusted. The military arrangements she proposed were equally unsatisfactory. She intended, of course, to use her main army in Northern Italy, and she was demanding that Craig's force should march with Lacy's Russians to join it. The proposal was out of the question. It would destroy the value which the expedition derived from its amphibious nature—the only real value it had—and would jeopardise Sicily. Gower again had refused.¹

In the same bag with this despatch was a second giving details of the intended movements of the Russians for the coercion of Prussia and their requirements in Northern Europe. "I am to press," wrote Gower, "the advantage to the cause which would be derived by a demonstration on the English coast, and that a collection of transports in the Downs and the movement of troops upon the shore would not fail to add considerably to the embarrassments of Bonaparte." They further hoped that when operations began a British force would appear in the Elbe and land.²

These measures did not appeal to Pitt. The hour for them had not yet struck, and he was not to be drawn into ventures beyond the force at his disposal or beyond what the precarious situation warranted—and the situation was obviously precarious. Indeed, the whole plan of action had a half-hearted ring about it that was not to his mind. It was the work of a joint council of war upon which the Austrian representative was General Mack. High as was

¹ Gower to Mulgrave, Aug. 14th, received Sept. 1st: *F. O. Foreign*, 58. Holland Rose, *Third Coalition*, p. 197.

² Same to same, August 14th: *F. O. Russia*, 58. Received September 1st.

his reputation as an administrative soldier, he was not a man to inspire confidence, and the suggested dispositions savoured strongly of his hand. Pitt, therefore, had no hesitation in supporting the attitude Gower had taken up. "The proposals and plan of operations," wrote Mulgrave in his reply, "present rather the laboured details of obstacles to any attempt at opening a campaign against the French than a system of active and vigorous operations." As to the special Russian demands, he was to say that England was ready to subsidise everybody, but that it was useless to send any force to the Elbe and Weser to co-operate with the Swedes and Russians until the main operations had developed. This, of course, was strictly in accordance with the principles on which alone such expeditions could materially affect a Continental campaign.¹

To what extent Nelson was consulted on the main scheme of the great Coalition is uncertain. But one contribution he made to it is very noteworthy. He had known Mack when in 1798 that admired officer had been sent down to command the Neapolitan army, and he was convinced nothing good could come of operations committed to his charge. Though not consulted by the Government in the matter, he did his best to warn them through his old friend the Duke of Clarence, and that in no measured terms. "If your Royal Highness," he is recorded to have said, "has any communication with Government, let not General Mack be employed, for I know him to be a rascal, a scoundrel, and a coward."² It is probable that his deep interest in foreign politics led him to make other suggestions. "No Minister," wrote his devoted chaplain, "ever

¹ Mulgrave to Gower, September 3rd: *F. O. Foreign*, 58.

² Clarke and M'Arthur, ii. 117. Nelson's opinion must not, of course, be taken too seriously. Mack was a man who had risen from the ranks, but whether by his ability or, like Raleigh, by "his bold and plausible tongue," opinions differed. The British War Office inclined to believe in him. Napoleon regarded him as a charlatan.

better understood the *tone* of the times he lived in." True, he himself says he was so short a time in England, and not more than four times in London, that he could hardly talk of anything seriously but naval affairs.¹ Still, his contemporary biographers assert that "he visited various departments and showed Ministers the dangers to which they were particularly exposed in the Mediterranean, the errors that had too long been persisted in, and the events and changes that might be expected to take place in Europe from the prevailing aspect of its political horizon."² The statement is confirmed by Wellington's well-known account of their dramatic meeting in Castlereagh's ante-room, when the "Sepoy General" came to report himself on his safe return, and Nelson was waiting to take his leave. At first impressed adversely, like Barham, with his egotistic conversation, "so vain and so silly as to surprise and almost disgust me," he changed his opinion when Nelson found out who he was. "Then," said the Duke, "he talked of the state of the country and of the aspect and probabilities of affairs on the Continent with a good sense and a knowledge of subjects both at home and abroad, that surprised me equally. . . . In fact, he talked like an officer and a statesman."³

It would be worth much to know what were the ideas of Nelson's that so deeply impressed the great soldier—to know whether perchance they discussed the policy Pitt even then had in mind and which Wellington brought to so full a fruition. The idea of pressing Napoleon from the sea at his weakest point was at least an old and favourite one with the Admiral. Years before he had discussed it with another famous soldier of the Revolution. Dumouriez was then in exile at Aton, finding relief for the disappointment of his warred career in advising the British Government on the

¹ To Sir A. Ball, Sept. 30th. *Nicolas*, vii. 55.

² *Clarke and M'Arthur*, ii. 117.

³ *Croker, Diary*, ii. 233.

defence of England. He had just presented them with the last of his elaborate appreciations, and now seeing in Nelson the embodiment of his own and Pitt's policy of counter-attack in the Mediterranean, the neglected General found new hope of measuring swords at last with the man who had supplanted him. "My constant desires are to co-operate with you in Italy," he wrote. "All my hopes at the very point of the Continental war are in your counsels to your Ministry to provide me with a foreign army of Italians or Austrians to attack the upstart Corsican through the centre of Italy." He had already submitted a plan to Vienna. "And if," he continued, "I receive the command of the diversion, we will realise together the projects we formed at our first meeting in Hamburg, against the barbarian usurpator whom we equally abhor."¹

It was with his mind filled with these preoccupations that Nelson had been trying to enjoy his rest down at Merton. From his first interview with Pitt he seems to have understood that he might be called on at any moment to resume his command.² But till Villeneuve's fleet was located and the situation cleared he could only wait, holding himself ready for the summons at any moment. Both he and his friends knew it must come. Lord Hood told him on August 26th he felt sure Villeneuve had gone to the Mediterranean or Cadiz, and that he would certainly have to go to sea again.³ The naval tension of that last week in August was as high as the political. Alert for the great summons, Nelson would accept no invitations. In

¹ Rose and Broadley: *Dumouriez and the Defence of England*, p. 453, Sept. 11th, citing *Add. MSS.*, 34931, f. 160; and see *Ibid.*, p. 207, for his letter to Nelson of April 20, 1801: "If you have charge of the Mediterranean Sea we can together deliver Italy and France of the democratic tyranny." Two other letters are *Ibid.*, pp. 208-210. For his appreciation, written after he knew Villeneuve was at Coruña and on the false supposition that Calder would blockade him there, see *Ibid.*, ch. xiii.

² Nelson to Keats, August 24th: Postscript, "You see by my writing tackle that I am not yet mounted as Commander-in-chief": *Nicolas*, vii. 16.

³ *Add. MSS.*, 34930.

refusing one on the 29th he says, "Every ship, even the *Victory*, is ordered out, for there is an entire ignorance whether the Ferrol fleet is coming to the northward, gone to the Mediterranean, or cruising for our valuable homeward-bound fleet"; and again the same day, expressing the same doubts, he says, "My time and movements must depend upon Buonaparte. We are at present ignorant of his intentions."¹

It was four days later that Blackwood in the grey dawn broke in upon him with the glorious news. Nelson immediately followed him to London, and found all excitement at the release of the strain. "Thank God! Thank God!" wrote the veteran Lord Radstock, "a thousand thousand times that these Jack o' Lanterns are once more safely housed without having done that mischief which was justly dreaded. The papers tell us you will shortly be after them."²

That his hour had come he took as a matter of course. It was the call for which he had been waiting. The first order that left the Admiralty after Blackwood's chaise had rattled down Whitehall was one to stop the *Victory*—probably it was Nelson's first request.³ The next was to Cornwallis cancelling the directions he had received to send Cotton to replace Calder in command of the southern half of his fleet. Then a day passed in which there is nothing but one of the cruel orders that tell so harshly the strain of the crisis. Men were lacking for the ships that were to reinforce Nelson, and all station commanders received directions to press seamen from the homeward-bound convoys. The next day is silence, and well it might be; for it so happened that the day on which Blackwood reached

¹ On August 29th there is a Minute ordering the *Victory* to join Cornwallis the moment she is ready to sail, and to tell Nelson she is no longer under his command: *Admiralty Minutes*, 154.

² Admiral Lord Radstock to Nelson, September 3rd: *Add. MSS.*, 34931.

³ *Admiralty Minutes*, 154, Sept. 2nd.

the Admiralty with the longed-for news, was also the day on which came in the first reports that the Boulogne camp was breaking up. The revolution in the campaign had come about—an entirely new phase had begun, and all day Barham was at work upon a remarkable series of orders to meet it. On the morrow they were complete.¹ Their purport must be dealt with later. Suffice it now to say that when Nelson's were put into his hands he found them of a nature which fully confirms what we are told of Barham's conversion. "In confidence in his zeal and ability," the old Mediterranean station was to be restored as far west as St. Vincent, and placed in his hands with full liberty to distribute his squadron as he pleased. He was given in fact a free hand, subject only to two provisos. He was to prevent the enemy from putting to sea, and he was to protect the Mediterranean convoys.²

Of the military operations it was still impossible to say anything definitely. But the prospect was brighter. The Admiralty's news that Bickerton had seen Craig's expedition safely as far as Cape Bona had come opportunely to hand the day after Blackwood's arrival. On September 5th were received two despatches from Sir Arthur Paget, our ambassador at Vienna. The first was filled with despair at Austria's insisting on a preliminary attempt at mediation, but the second announced that the Austrian Foreign

¹ This day, Sept. 4th, must have been one of the heaviest known to the Admiralty. There were then seven "Senior Clerks" (£800-£350) and seventeen "Junior Clerks" (£250-£90) to deal with the routine of the enormous number of ships in commission; and only four days before they had memorialised for an increase of salary (*Minutes*, 154, Aug. 29th). In July Barham had made an attempt to reduce this paper work by issuing printed forms for returning "Dispositions" and for acknowledging orders and letters. The latter had three columns: (1) The date, (2) Subject of the letter, (3) Result, *i.e.* the action that had been or would be taken on it. For examples, see *In-letters*, 552, August 2nd and 4th.

² *Out-letters*, 1363, Sept. 4th. On the 6th Marsden the Secretary informed him they were ready and requested him to call for them.—*Add. MSS.*, 34931. For Barham's Memo. to Pitt on the whole naval situation, and his letter to Nelson explaining his functions, see Appendix G, *post*, p. 521.

Minister, Cobenzl, had just informed him that he had couched his demands to Napoleon in such a way that war was inevitable.¹ In the same hour, too, there was a despatch from Elliot. The Queen, he said, was prostrate at the insolence with which the French envoy had delivered Napoleon's harsh ultimatum. The end seemed at hand, and the Russians, impatient for action, were growing suspicious at hearing nothing from Craig. Still there was hope. The attitude of Austria had prevented any reinforcement of St. Cyr, and Elliot himself had been doing his best to allay the impatience of the Russians by putting them in communication with Captain Sotheron of the *Excellent*, the senior British naval officer on the station.²

Immediate action was now taken. The crisis was clearly acute. There could be no doubt that Craig had reached Malta, and by this time would be in communication with Lacy; and on the morrow the Admiralty was requested to order all transports at Gibraltar to proceed to Malta forthwith.³

On the same day, moreover, full confirmation was received of the reported abandonment of the invasion. The cutter, *Courier*, had just cut out of Tréport a French schooner which had left Boulogne on the 2nd. Her skipper asserted that the flotilla there was being dismantled, and that the troops had marched off into the country six days before, "because of a new war with Russia." Napoleon, he said, was still at Boulogne when he sailed, but was expected to leave in a day or two. The Tréport division of the flotilla was also found to be landing its stores and ammunition.⁴

¹ Paget to Mulgrave, August 10 and 17, received September 5th (at night): *F. O. Austria*, 74.

² Elliot to Mulgrave, July 23rd, received September 5th (at night): *F. O. Sicily*. Printed in Auriol, ii. 368.

³ *Admiralty In-letters (Secretary of State)*, 4199, September 6th.

⁴ *Admiralty In-letters*, 552, September 5th. Sent to the War Office next day.—*W. O. (i.)*, 712. It is worth noting that at this time every scrap of naval intelligence was forwarded daily to the War Office as soon as it came in.

By this time, therefore, it was obvious that henceforth the head and front of British action was in the Mediterranean area, and that Nelson was the central figure. Flattering as was the position, he regarded it without enthusiasm. "I hope," he wrote to his friend Davidson on the 6th, "my absence will not be long, and that I shall soon meet the combined fleets with a force sufficient to do the job well; for half a victory would but half content me. But I do not believe the Admiralty can give me a force within fifteen or sixteen sail of the line of the enemy. . . . But I will do my best, and I hope God Almighty will go with me. I have much to lose, but little to gain: and I go because it is right, and I will serve the country faithfully." He had had scarcely more than a week's real rest to restore the long strain upon his shattered constitution, and the situation before him was one of the utmost difficulty. It was not so much a question of how to defeat the enemy—of that he had little doubt—it was how to entice or force them to a decisive action. Unless this could be done, the only prospect before him was another long winter blockade.

This problem was now his main pre-occupation. In his last interview with Castlereagh, after his meeting with Wellesley, the advisability of using a military force for the purpose of forcing Villeneuve's hand had been discussed. Whether the suggestion came from Nelson, or the War Minister, or possibly from Wellesley, is not clear. Castlereagh implies that Nelson was in favour of it, and says distinctly that the Admiral only refrained from pressing for military assistance because he regarded the season as too far advanced for the operation to be undertaken that year.¹

The fairest promise of bringing the enemy to action by naval means alone lay in the inferiority of the force which

¹ Castlereagh to Nelson: *Letters and Despatches*, 2nd series, vol. i. p. 124. This letter was written the day before the news of Nelson's death reached London.

would be at his disposal at least for some time. But here lay also his chief trouble; for an action with inferior force could hardly prove decisive, and it was a decisive action that would be expected. To this alternative, however, he reconciled himself. His general plan was to conceal as far as possible the amount of his force in hopes of tempting Villeneuve to commit himself to an attack. All day on September 11th he was at the Admiralty issuing orders as Commander-in-chief. On the 12th he took leave of Pitt and Castlereagh, and on the morrow, after a day at Merton, he set out at night for Spithead. The enthusiasm of his reception at Portsmouth next morning did something to lift the weight of anxiety that oppressed him. Early in the morning he went off to the *Victory* and rehoisted his flag. Two of the Ministers, Canning and Rose, accompanied him to see him off.¹ They dined on board, and then Nelson made the signal to weigh, little dreaming that, as he began to face his almost hopeless task, Napoleon in the self-same hour was issuing, in untaught disregard of his enemy, the very order he prayed for—the order which would solve the insoluble and deliver Villeneuve into his hands.

Yet so it was—as though Fate had willed that no touch should be wanting to the dramatic intensity of the campaign as it pressed to its catastrophe. It was on August 30th, amidst the littered wastes where the Ocean camp had been, that the Emperor signed the decree demobilising the Flotilla. The following day, with his eye on the British army, he was busy arranging for its defence against a descent from the sea. It was at this time he must have received from Villeneuve the despatches which told of his return to Cadiz; for on September 1st Decrès, on Napoleon's instructions, was sending him fresh orders to meet the changed aspect of the campaign. "With those thirty-six

¹ Canning was at this time Treasurer of the Navy, and Rose Vice-President of the Board of Trade and Joint Paymaster-General.

of the line," the Minister wrote, "his Majesty's will is that his flag and that of his allies command the whole of the Andalusian coasts and the Straits, because he regards it as impossible that the enemy can confront you there with an equal force. It is said at this moment that England is preparing a convoy and some sort of expedition which is presumed to be destined for the Mediterranean. His Majesty's will is that you should take all fitting precautions to get warning of the approach of this expedition and to destroy it."¹

It would seem that fresh news must just have come in about Baird's expedition at Cork and that it increased Napoleon's annoyance. Still he did not anticipate that it would lead to any serious naval developments, nor was a fleet action any longer in his mind. While Decrès was penning the new orders for Villeneuve, Napoleon himself was sketching out a fresh plan of operation for his naval force, by which it was to be broken up into a number of cruising squadrons and devoted to commerce destruction. Besides three cruiser squadrons it was his intention to establish no less than seven others from his battle force—three from the Brest fleet, and four from Cadiz, employing thirty of the line and eleven frigates.²

With this unsatisfactory project in his mind he set out next day for Paris, brooding over the blow his prestige had suffered from his ignominious failure to invade, and over the tremendous campaign he had to face in order to recover it—and as he brooded his anger burned hotter and hotter against Villeneuve. It was in these days that he finally persuaded himself that the whole fiasco was due to Villeneuve and to Villeneuve alone; and on the 13th, as Nelson was passing his last quiet hours at Merton, he sat down to

¹ Desbrière, iv. 823, and see *ante*, p. 309.

² Napoleon to Decrès, September 1st: *Correspondance*, xi. 170.

concoct his famous Legend of the Invasion—a legend which to this day has lost little of its vitality.

“I meant,” he wrote, “to concentrate forty or fifty ships of the line in the port of Martinique by combined operations from Toulon, Cadiz, Ferrol, and Brest [yet it had never been his idea that the Ferrol squadron should go there]; to bring them back suddenly on Boulogne; to make myself master of the sea for a fortnight [it had always varied before from a few hours to four days]; to have 150,000 men and 10,000 horses encamped on this coast [yet he had never had two-thirds of that strength]; and immediately on the signal of my fleet’s approach to land in England and seize London and the Thames. This project failed to succeed. If Admiral Villeneuve instead of entering Ferrol [which he never did] had merely called out the Spanish squadron [it was Franco-Spanish and could not have got out sooner for the wind] and had sailed for Brest to join with Admiral Ganteaume, my army would have landed and it would have been all over with England.” And yet he knew full well, if Villeneuve’s stores had permitted him to do so, he would have fallen into the midst of the overpowering concentration that awaited him off Brest. So he goes on to try to explain away his original mistake in believing the operation feasible with the armed flotilla alone. It was absolutely useless, he says, but if he had collected ordinary unarmed transports the English would at once have penetrated his design of bringing his massed fleets into the Channel. The costly creation and armament of the flotilla was solely intended to deceive them as to the direction from which the real danger was coming and it was successful. “The enemy were duped,” he says with heroic effrontery. “They thought I meant to pass by main force with the pure military strength of the flotilla. The idea of my real project never dawned on them.” The unblushing misrepresentation of what he knew to be the facts almost takes away

the breath. But that a man of Napoleon's imagination should have penned such a document is less astounding than that it should ever have been taken seriously. It obviously reflects nothing but anxiety for his shattered prestige, and was simply a political manifesto designed to save his face, in which his freedom with the facts of the case was only bounded by his genius for gauging the limits of popular credulity.¹

The anxiety under which he invented his great fable is clear to see in the next document which came from his pen. To add to his trouble it would seem that further information had just reached him from Italy of the danger that threatened the right flank of his vast movement. His scheme for a world-wide campaign against British commerce was suddenly laid aside, and the following day fresh orders went off to Villeneuve, which gave the Combined Fleet a new and pressing function. So immediate was the necessity for bold and prompt action that he would not even permit Decrès to tell the unhappy Admiral what he thought of him. With one more appeal to his courage and audacity, he told him not to wait for six months' stores, as he had been enjoined in the last orders, but to be content with two, and get to sea at once to save the situation. "Having resolved," he said, still holding back from admitting he was on his defence—"having resolved to make a powerful diversion by directing into the Mediterranean our naval forces concentrated at the port of

¹ For the vitality of the legend, see Captain Gabriel Darrien's *La Guerre sur Mer*, 1907, pp. 63 *et seq.* Writing seven years after the publication of the French Staff History, the Professor of Strategy can still quote the paper and say, "It is a specimen of magnificent strategy; its principles are impeccable and the plan in its grandiose proportions could and should have succeeded." He accepts in their entirety Napoleon's travesty of the facts and his elimination of the enemy; treats Barham's dispositions as matters of pure chance; and then, as his better judgment and conspicuous knowledge of his profession reassert themselves, he proceeds to show that the whole plan was based on the Emperor's profound ignorance of the elements of naval warfare, and had no chance of success.

Cadiz, combined with those of his Catholic Majesty, we would have you know that our intention is that, immediately on receipt of these presents, you will seize the first favourable opportunity of sailing with the Combined Fleet and proceeding into that sea. . . . You will first make for Cartagena to join the Spanish squadron which is in that port; you will then proceed to Naples and disembark on some point of the coast the troops you carry on board to join the army under the orders of General St. Cyr. If you find at Naples any English or Russian ships of war, you will seize them. The fleet under your command will remain off the Neapolitan shores so long as you may judge necessary to do the utmost harm to the enemy, and to intercept an expedition which they intend to send from Malta. Our intention is that wherever you meet the enemy in inferior force you will attack them without hesitation and obtain a decision against them. It will not escape you that the success of these operations depends essentially on the promptness of your leaving Cadiz."¹

It is in this apprehension for St. Cyr and particularly in the threat from Malta, that we get the key of the rest of the campaign, and how it was that Pitt, by his little expedition, forced Napoleon to sacrifice his fleet to Nelson. On the following day the Emperor wrote again to Decrès explaining, without disguise, that the primary object of the new orders was to deal with Craig's expedition and prevent any further action of the same kind in the Mediterranean. So absolutely essential did he regard the movement that a day's reflection had convinced him that he could not risk leaving its execution to Villeneuve's nerveless hands. He must be superseded by a more vigorous officer. Admiral Rosily, who had been originally intended to replace Missiessy, was the man he chose, and Decrès was told he was to order him

¹ Napoleon to Villeneuve, St. Cloud, Sept. 14th: *Correspondance*, xl. 195.

to set out for Cadiz forthwith and take over the command if the fleet had not put to sea.¹

So the old device which Pitt had inherited from his father worked the miracle—by sheer force of strategical law and by no clearly expressed intention. Nelson at least never alludes to the possibility of its proving a solution of his difficulty, and as Rosily's orders were being written—and it was these that eventually did the work—he was clearing the Channel with Blackwood and two of the line that had joined from Plymouth, all unconscious that his arch-enemy was stretching out to him the crown of his career.

¹ To Decrès, September 15th, and Rosily's Instructions, September 17th: *Correspondance*, xi. 204 and 217.

CHAPTER XX

SECURING THE COMMUNICATIONS

ALL's well that ends well; but the strain which had prevailed at the British Admiralty until Villeneuve had been located and safely housed had driven home certain lessons. It was clear that the existing cruiser system was far too loose and unscientific to ensure such an effective command of European waters as Pitt's intended operations demanded. Barham at all events set himself, in concert with Nelson, to organise his cruiser control on sounder lines for the rest of the campaign. Drury, who at Cork had been directing the most important squadron both for intelligence and commerce protection, had shown little grasp of his functions, and was constantly being found fault with by the Admiralty. And as for the captains, the leading idea with many of them was that when sent off on detached service they were to enjoy the luxury of "a cruise" with a chance of distinction and prize money. The freedom in which they sometimes indulged themselves was outrageous, and the whole system cried out for severe restraint and organisation.¹

Circumstances were favourable for an improvement. The release of the strain on Keith's squadron caused by the abandonment of the invasion set a good many cruisers at liberty, while at the same time a new means of increasing

¹ See especially the case of the *Cerberus*. After *Missesay's* escape from Rochefort she was sent from Saumarez's squadron, on March 27th, to cruise about Madeira for a month and to return immediately. She did not come back till July 15th, and Saumarez was directed to express to her captain "the high disapprobation of the Admiralty."—*In-letters*, 223; *Secret Orders*, 1363.

the power of communication was available. With the latter there can be no doubt Nelson had a good deal to do. Barrow relates that in the morning of the Admiral's last day in London, he was at the Admiralty inquiring earnestly about a code of signals just then improved and enlarged. "I assured him," he writes, "they were all but ready: that he should not be disappointed, and that I would take care they were at Portsmouth the following morning." But even so, Nelson could not rest. He looked in again in the evening, the last thing before leaving for Merton. Barrow was staying late on purpose to see them off. "I pledged myself," he says, "not to leave the office till a messenger was despatched with the signals, should the post have departed, and that he might rely on their being at Portsmouth the following morning. On this he shook hands with me . . . and he departed apparently more than usually cheerful."

What Nelson was so anxious to have was the famous code which he was soon to immortalise, entitled *Telegraphic Signals or Marine Vocabulary*, the recent invention of Sir Home Popham. As yet it had not been fully adopted into the service, but at the outbreak of the war in 1803, it had been so far recognised as to be issued to ships of the line.¹ Apparently it had been issued to Keith's cruiser squadron, where the inventor had been using it with great success. Under Popham's direction indeed it proved so great a convenience, especially in bad weather when per-

¹ Nelson had certainly used it to communicate with his battleship captains (see e.g. his letter to Hargood, Aug. 5th: Nicolas, vii. 3). In saying the code had just been improved and enlarged Barrow's memory must have deceived him. According to the Introduction and successive Prefaces to the work, the first edition was privately printed in 1800, and was used by Popham in the Baltic principally for communicating between his ship, the *Romney* 50, off Copenhagen, and Admiral Dickson at Elsinore. Later on he used it in the Red Sea, and by the encouragement of Lord Spencer, then First Lord, he prepared a new edition when he came home, adding two new parts. Part I. (the old edition) had about 1000 words; Part II. added 1000 more, and Part III. a number of sentences and phrases. This edition was in quarto, and issued in 1803. Up till 1809 there were several reprints in a cheaper octavo form, but no additions or changes were made.

sonal communication was impossible, that its value could no longer be doubted. Accordingly, during the time Nelson was being consulted by Barham, it was decided, apparently in some haste, that every ship should have a copy, and the decision seems closely related to the new system of cruising.

This system was based on the modern idea of cruiser lines. The most important one was to be established by the Irish Admiral, to extend from Cape Clear to Finisterre. The order was one of those forwarded in those famous days of hard work that followed Blackwood's arrival and brought Nelson in hot haste up to London. Lord Gardner, whose sick-leave had expired, and who was about to relieve Drury at Cork, was informed that his frigates were to cruise in a line between Cape Clear and Finisterre, in order to keep up as direct a communication as possible with the other stations, and for the protection of the trade and the annoyance of the enemy. And in case of falling in with any squadrons of the enemy they were not to quit them for the purpose of giving information until they should have followed them so far on their course as to be certain of their destination. Then they were to make the best of their way to the Admiral to whom in their judgment the intelligence was most material.¹

Three frigates were all that could be spared for the purpose at the moment, but Cornwallis was directed to keep one of his own cruisers permanently off Finisterre to complete the line, and all his other ten frigates, which he kept normally to the westward, reinforced it as required. At no time, however, were enough vessels employed in the service to constitute a cruiser line in the modern sense.²

¹ Gardner to Admiralty, Sept. 9th: *In-letters*, 620. He says the orders were dated Sept. 6th. In *Barham Papers*, iii. p. 210, is a draft of them undated.

² Cornwallis, it should be said, did not recognise anything peculiarly new in the arrangement, and perhaps a little resented the reflection on his usual

It was rather a patrol line to secure a proper distribution of cruisers for covering the ground as effectively as possible.

Beyond Finisterre the line was to be continued down to St. Vincent, so as to connect Cornwallis's command with Nelson's, and this extension was undoubtedly the suggestion of Nelson himself. He had been consulted on the question by Barham soon after his arrival in London, and had reduced his opinion to writing in the following letter:—

“‘ALBEMARLE,’ *Augt. 29th, 1805.*

“MY DEAR LORD,—With great deference I venture by Your Lordship's desire to state my opinion of the necessity of a constant succession of frigates and fast sailing sloops being employed for the protection of our Commerce and the destruction of the Enemy's numerous privateers on the Coast of Portugal, from off Cape Ortugal to St. Ubes, many of them small, lurking under the Bayonne Islands and the Burlings. Ships on this service would not only prevent the depredations of the Privateers but be in the way to watch any Squadron of the Enemy should they pass on their track. A frigate belonging to the Mediterranean Fleet must always be off Cape St. Vincent. Therefore intelligence will be quickly conveyed and the Enemy I think never again lost sight of. I was happy to hear from good Mr. Thompson that Your Lordship had thought of extending frigates as much as possible from Cape Finisterre to Ireland. This will effectually protect our Commerce and in every way greatly annoy the Enemy.—I am ever, my dear Lord, your most faithful Servant,

“NELSON & BRONTÉ.”¹

methods. In owning a copy of the Irish Station order, together with his quota of Popham's Signal Books, he says: “The instructions contained in the order are nearly the same as have generally been given. I can therefore only guess why the copy of the order was sent to me.”—To the Admiralty, Sept. 28th: *In-letters*, 129, and see *post*, Appendix G, “Cruiser Lines,” p. 522.

¹ This important letter has hitherto been unpublished. It was presented to the Britannia R.N. College, Dartmouth, on Trafalgar Day, 1907, by Mrs.

Nelson's views were adopted, and a special squadron was devoted to the service. It was to consist of four sail, and was entrusted to Captain Lobb, who had been Popham's right-hand man off Boulogne—Popham himself being in command of Baird's escort with a broad pennant. This was the first squadron to be got off. An order for Lobb to receive the necessary number of Popham's signal books was made on Sept. 3rd and his instructions were signed the next day. They directed him to keep frequent communication between St. Vincent and Finisterre, with a view to making known intelligence of the enemy's fleets immediately to the Admirals at Ushant, Ferrol, or Cadiz, "or to any other line of cruisers which from time to time you may be acquainted with." If he failed to get touch with any such line the ship entrusted with the intelligence was to make as directly as possible for one of the Admirals, and Lobb was to be careful to keep in constant communication with Lisbon.¹

With these orders he received a letter covering his copies of the Signal Book. It explained that their lordships were of opinion that it might be used to advantage in communicating between ships at sea. He was to keep one copy himself and give the rest to his captains. On the 9th fifty copies were ordered to be put on board the *Victory* with a similar letter to Nelson. The same day Drury received twenty-five copies, and two days later fifty were ordered for Cornwallis.²

Coming as it did together with the establishment of cruiser lines, the issue of the telegraph code to cruisers reveals a distinct advance towards more scientific systems

Scarth (of Bearsted, Kent). Thompson was the First Lord's Private Secretary. For the diplomatic difficulties in the way of using Portuguese Ports as bases for Lobb's squadron see Barham to Mulgrave, *Barham Papers*, iii. 310, Aug. 15.

¹ *Out-letters (Secret Orders)*, 1184. For his working of the line see *Captains' Letters*, 2075.

² Drury to Admiralty: *In-letters*, 640, Sept. 9th. *Admiralty Minutes* 154, Sept. 3rd, 9th, 11th. A minute of Oct. 5th (*Ibid.* 155) shows copies sent to the West Indies and North America, and twenty more copies for Nelson.

of intelligence and commerce protection; and in view of the fact that Allemand was still at large, both were certainly needed. Such a squadron operating boldly about the terminal area of the great trade routes and on the vital line of communication with the Mediterranean fleet was a serious danger. Until it could be met with and disposed of, the whole situation must be in a constant state of unrest, and it becomes therefore a matter essential to a knowledge of the campaign to trace the motions of the disturbing factor and the efforts that were made to deal with it.

With his formidable squadron, consisting, as we have seen, of the *Majestueux* 120, four seventy-fours, three frigates, and a couple of sloops, Allemand, after finding nothing in Ferrol, had proceeded to the rendezvous off the Penmarcks which Villeneuve had sent to him at Vigo. He reached it by daybreak on August 30th. Cornwallis was of course watching this important landfall, and had cruising there the *Melampus* frigate and two sloops. Allemand chased them all that day without success, the *Melampus* making away for Cornwallis and the two sloops standing by. They were chased again next day and this time only escaped by sacrificing guns and gear. The *Melampus* reported to Cornwallis the following day and the action he took was entirely in the spirit of the tradition as to the functions of the Western Squadron. That function, as we have seen, was to secure the approaches to the Channel for all purposes; the blockade of Brest being only part of the means to effect that object. As has been already explained, this principle had been recognised in the normal distribution of the Home Fleet; that is, a small battle squadron was usually maintained on the south coast of Ireland, either under the Cork Admiral or as a division of the Western Squadron. Owing to the strain on the British naval resources caused by the three-power coalition, this squadron,

it will be remembered, had been absorbed into the Western Squadron and Cornwallis had devoted it to the great Biscay blockade. Hitherto this arrangement had sufficed to prevent any battle-ship interference with cruiser control of the Channel approaches; but with the appearance of Allemand's squadron on the scene that control was threatened, and threatened at a most critical time.

It so happened that Popham was in the act of sailing from Cork with Baird's expedition and a vast mass of the East and West India trade. He had nothing but a couple of sixty-fours, a fifty, and a few cruisers, and an encounter with such a squadron as Allemand's would have meant a serious disaster.¹ Whether Cornwallis knew the acuteness of this particular danger is not recorded, but there were others of which he had certainly been informed. Only a week before he had received from the Admiralty the very secret despatch already mentioned, informing him that Rainier's priceless convoy was about due, and bidding him have a special regard for its safety if there was any indication that the enemy were making it their objective.² Nor was this all. The first convoy from the Leeward Islands was also due, and owing to the suspension of the normal sailings by the irruption of Villeneuve and Missiessy it was unusually large. It consisted of no less than two hundred sail, and so rich was it that it will be remembered Cochrane, anticipating the orders of the Admiralty, had taken upon himself to assign for its escort the *Illustrious*, one of the two fast seventy-fours that Collingwood had detached after Nelson.³ Finally the

¹ *Log of the Diadem* (Sir Home Popham), *Captains' Logs*, 1743. He weighed on Aug. 28th, but did not get clear out of Queenstown harbour till the 31st.

² Cornwallis to Marsden, Aug. 20th: *In-letters*, 129. The route Rainier sailed was about two hundred miles west of the Azores and then for the Lizard.

³ Cochrane to the Admiralty, July 17th: *In-letters*, 326. *Admiralty Minutes*, July 11th, ordering him to send home the *Illustrious* and *Ramillies* with any convoy that was ready. He detained the *Ramillies* for the second convoy.

Lisbon-Oporto convoy outward-bound was also on the point of sailing.

It was a situation that was causing Barham considerable anxiety. He believed that the next move of the enemy would be to break up their main fleets and "to employ squadrons at sea" for preying on commerce, and this, as we have seen, had actually been Napoleon's intention until the news of Craig's expedition forced his hand.¹ Barham accordingly informed Gardner that he was going to place under his orders a heavy cruiser squadron as strong as circumstances would permit, not only for the annoyance of the enemy's cruisers, but for the protection of the homeward-bound convoys, and also of the western coasts when necessary. "By these means," he added, on the old principle of terminal commerce protection, "much strength will be added to the convoys, when they stand most in need of it."²

But if the enemy were likely to send out heavy squadrons this was not enough. Without battle-ship support frigates could not be effective. In the circumstances it was clear the old Irish squadron must be restored in some form or other from the Western Squadron into which it had been absorbed. So long as the Home division of that squadron was kept massed before Brest it could not support effectively the cruiser control of the Soundings. At all reasonable risk it must be divided, and we have seen how, as early as August 27th, Barham had directed Cornwallis to detach four or five of the line to receive the convoys a hundred leagues west-south-west of Scilly, so soon as he was reinforced sufficiently to be able to retain eighteen with his flag.³ Owing to the extreme

¹ See *ante*, p. 325.

² Barham to Gardner: *Barham Papers*, written between August 17th and 23rd. More than a month before, July 11th, he had ordered Dacres at Jamaica to send home four of his heaviest frigates for this purpose.—*Secret Orders*, 1363.

³ *Secret Orders*, 1363.

difficulty of manning the necessary ships until the Trade came home these reinforcements had been seriously delayed. Yet as soon as Cornwallis had got the report of Allemand's presence from the *Melampus* he did not hesitate a moment. To his broad view of the meaning of his fleet the danger to the trade route overrode the letter of Barham's order. His fleet, as Barham had recently told him, was the mainspring from which all offensive operations must proceed, and in this spirit he decided to make the detachment at once, having little doubt he could contain the Brest fleet with less than eighteen of the line until his reinforcements arrived.

Stirling, who had remained with his flag, was chosen for the command, and the force entrusted to him was just equal to that of Allemand and no more—on the principle perhaps that no squadron can do serious injury to trade with an equal squadron operating against it.¹ His instructions were unfortunate, though in the circumstances, correct. Allemand's presence off the Penmarcks determined Cornwallis not to send the detachment direct to the station Barham had ordered, for it indicated something different from a direct stroke at the convoys.

Allemand's position, however, was, as we know, a mistake. Napoleon at this time had almost given him up for lost and was raging at Villeneuve for his blunder. "Admiral Villeneuve," he wrote, "has filled the cup at last. On his sailing from Vigo he gives Captain Allemand the order to go to Brest and writes you that his intention is to go to Cadiz. That is absolute treason. Here is Allemand's squadron seriously compromised and he must roam the seas for months. . . . Villeneuve is a wretch we must break ignominiously."² But ignorant of these

¹ Stirling had *Glory* 98 (flag), four seventy-fours (*Repulse*, *Triumph*, *Dragon*, *Warrior*), and the *Crescent* 36. The *Melampus* and other cruisers were already out trying to locate the enemy.

² To Decrès, September 4th: *Correspondance*, xi. 176.

cross purposes Cornwallis could only interpret Allemand's inexplicable position as indicating an intention to seek supplies in L'Orient or Rochefort, and he decided to fling the division at him at once. Stirling was therefore directed first to look into both those ports, and if he found the enemy in either to blockade it. If, on the other hand, he ascertained they had not gone in, he was "immediately to proceed to the northward to protect the homeward-bound convoys and see them into the Channel."¹

With these instructions Stirling parted company on August 31st, and proceeding along the Breton coast looked into L'Orient on September 1st. No attempt was made to spread and for this perhaps Stirling is not to be blamed, for it was incredible Allemand would be cruising so close to Cornwallis. So without any suspicion of the enemy's being so near, Stirling had passed inshore of him, and finding nothing in L'Orient he worked down with light and baffling airs past Belleisle and the Morbihan to look into Rochefort. But in vain; gales succeeded the calm weather and baffled his purpose. For a week he was hovering on the coast within fifty miles of Allemand, and yet neither got wind of the other.²

All this time the adventurous French commodore had been cruising about fifteen leagues from the Penmarcks, trying to pick up news of Villeneuve. On the 5th he spoke a Portuguese who had recently sighted the Combined Squadron at sea to the north-westward of Ferrol, and had also seen Calder off Finisterre. The natural inference was

¹ Cornwallis to Marsden, September 2nd: *Blockade of Brest*, ii. 352. His actual orders to Stirling have not been found. It is uncertain, therefore, whether he instructed him to take Barham's position—100 leagues W.S.W. of Scilly.

² The failure to locate Allemand seems to have been partly due to bad cruising. On September 6th the *Melampus* came back to say she had been chased by four of the line off the Saints the day before in thick weather. But subsequently it proved that the ships from which she had run were two of Cornwallis's own frigates and two sloops.—*Blockade of Brest*, ii. 358-361.

that Villeneuve had found it impossible to proceed to the northward and was being forced to retire to Cadiz. In the circumstances it was worse than useless for Allemand to hold the rendezvous longer. On the morrow, moreover, he found that one of the sloops which he had chased off had picked him up again, and there and then he decided to get away to the southward immediately. He was only just in time. Two days later Stirling ascertained from neutrals that the evasive squadron was not in Rochefort, and he held away under a press of sail for his station off Scilly, passing on his way over the very ground which Allemand had just vacated.¹

Narrow as was the escape it was complete. Stirling with all the speed he could make was going as wide as possible from his chase. It was nearly a week before he reached the entrance to the Channel, and here he found Parker in the *Amazon*, whom Cornwallis had sent away the day before Allemand was reported, to cruise to the westward.² He had been a fortnight on the station doing his best to protect the stragglers of the Jamaica convoy which had just passed in, and two days before meeting Stirling had been rewarded by capturing the *Principe de la Paz*, a fine new Vigo privateer of twenty-four guns, commanded by a famous French skipper; but of Allemand he had found no trace.³ Stirling, however, continued to hold the position. He had heard the Jamaica convoy was safe, but nothing of Rainier's East Indiamen, although in fact they had all anchored safely in the Downs, as Stirling was leav-

¹ Stirling to Cornwallis, September 16th. "Scilly bearing N.E. by E. 26 leagues," enclosed in Cornwallis to Marsden, September 27th.—*In-letters*, 129.

² Parker to his mother, August 30th.—"Since writing the above I joined Admiral Cornwallis, who with the best intentions and in the kindest manner has ordered me to cruise three weeks to the westward for the protection of the homeward-bound trade."—Phillimore, *Life of Sir W. Parker*, i. 305.

³ Parker to Cornwallis: *Blockade of Brest*, ii. 359. Her commander was François Beck. She had taken our Lisbon packet and a letter of Marque. The crew of the latter and a considerable sum of specie were on board.

ing the French coast to cover their entrance into the Channel. On September 19th, as he was thus engaged, he was gladdened with the sight of a strange squadron. It closely resembled the one he sought, and clearing for action he gave chase. But the strangers proved to be Nelson with his four consorts, struggling against south-westerly winds on his way to Cadiz. He of course could report that nothing had been heard of Allemand Channelwards, and that Rainier was in safety. Moreover, while they were still together, the *Decade* appeared from the southward bringing home Admiral Bickerton on sick leave. She also had nothing to report. Nelson accordingly proceeded on his way, and Stirling, instead of continuing to hold the position, turned back to rejoin Cornwallis.¹

No decision could have been more unfortunate; for it so happened, as we shall see directly, that on that very day Allemand by a remarkably bold stroke was taking up a cruising station not forty-five leagues to the west of him. With all the facts before us it is easy to condemn the movement—not so much as a stroke of ill-luck as an error of judgment—the only one that can be laid at Cornwallis's door during his admirable conduct of the station. Seeing that all the convoys were not yet in and Allemand was still unlocated, it will probably be thought that he should at least have sent Stirling back the moment he rejoined. But it must be remembered the situation was by no means easy. The probability was that Ganteaume, now if ever, would make a desperate attempt to break out and join Villeneuve at Cadiz, and any weakening of the Brest blockade except for high cause was to be avoided. In the view of the Admiralty, Allemand must have returned to port, and even before Rainier had been heard of, they had

¹ *Log of the Glory* (Stirling's flag), *Captains' Logs*, 1544. Cornwallis to Admiralty with Stirling's Report, Sept. 22-27. See also "Proceedings of the Fleet."—*Nelson Papers*, *Add. MSS.*, 34973, and *Nicolas*, vii. p. 46. Stirling rejoined on Sept. 22nd.

actually informed Cornwallis he was at liberty to reconsider the necessity of making the detachment they had ordered.¹ It was on these amended instructions he decided to keep his squadron massed for the present.

And how, in fact, did Allemand come to be where he was? If ever squadron bore a charmed life it was his. After miraculously escaping Stirling off the Penmarcks, as above related, he had made for Cadiz fair into the lap of Calder. There seemed no possibility of his return, yet again a happy accident was to keep him out of harm's way. This time, however, it was his characteristic mixture of daring and caution that earned its reward. On his way down the coast of Portugal he heard for certain that Villeneuve was in Cadiz, and he pushed on under every stitch he could carry, but not direct for the port. After passing St. Vincent on September 11th he warily held on to the southward till he reached the latitude of the Straits. Here he would be certain to fall in with something that could tell him how things stood, and sure enough the same day a British brig came gaily into his squadron thinking he was Nelson, who was daily expected.² She, of course, had to strike, and from her crew Allemand learnt that Cadiz was blockaded by twenty-six of the line and Cartagena by five. His position was now of extreme difficulty. To break the blockade by force was impossible. A lucky flaw of weather might enable him to run it, but then if he failed, so he argued, his retreat would almost certainly be cut off by Nelson as he came down the coast. He had, therefore, to recognise that his courageous attempt to join Villeneuve had failed, and he ran out into the ocean to consider what he was to do.

The result was worthy of him and of the best traditions

¹ *Admiralty Minutes*, 154, Sept. 3rd.

² Allemand says she was the *Phæbus*, from Gibraltar to Grenada. She does not appear in any navy list, and must have been a simple trader.

of the French service. Calling his captains to council, he read them the passages in his instructions which seemed to meet the case. "You will consume your provisions in cruising wherever you can do the enemy most harm, and you will not return to port till six months after sailing." The place where he could do most harm was the mouth of the Channel, but he did not disguise from himself not only that the West Indian and American convoys then due came home under strong escort, but that in all probability a battle squadron would be sent out to meet them. Now, as we have seen, Stirling at the moment was hurrying with all speed to take up the station, as Allemand feared. Still he read on: "Your instructions will clearly inform you of the spirit of your mission and its object. . . . Use all your audacity to do harm to the enemy—that is the pith of what the Emperor commands." "Then," says the intrepid commodore, "I hesitated no longer, and I laid my course to take up a station to the westward of the Lizard."¹

It was a bold resolution, and it came within an ace at the outset of winning him a resounding success. To the northward Popham was passing down with his vast convoy and Baird's expedition, and the course, which Allemand was steering to make his westing in the usual way, would take him right athwart Popham's track. As things stood, it was almost inevitable they should clash, Popham's noon position on the 9th was about 200 miles N.N.W. of Finisterre, and on the 11th Allemand started from the Straits' mouth to the north-west. Had Popham held on there is no saying what might have happened, but by good luck it so happened that he met baffling winds, and in three days made little more than thirty miles on his true course. Thus it happened that Allemand must have crossed his track certainly not more than three days ahead of him, and

¹ Allemand's *Journal*: Desbrière, iv. 794.

probably much less.¹ Recent writers have commented on the ease with which we passed military expeditions to their destinations in the height of the Trafalgar campaign, but it is submitted such complacency is wholly unwarranted. Both Craig and Baird had run the gravest risk of destruction. In Craig's case the danger arose by no fault of the Admiralty, for the most scientific arrangement had been made to cover his passage. But Baird's sailing was based on a supposition—a supposition for which there was no direct evidence—that Allemand had returned to port, and the best opinion will hardly regard the movement as a fair risk of war. Luck, and luck alone, saved him.

But now Fortune, having dealt so kindly with Baird, had a smile for Allemand. After so narrowly missing the glorious chance, which his audacity and enterprise had earned him, he was making almost exactly for the position which Barham had told Cornwallis to occupy—that is, about a hundred leagues west-south-west of Scilly. It was about one hundred and fifty miles to the westward of the position Stirling had taken, and we have seen how Allemand reached it the day Stirling and Nelson met. By what reasoning or intuition Barham divined that this position would not be far enough to the westward we cannot tell, nor why it was Stirling did not carry out Barham's instructions. It is possible, of course, that Cornwallis compromised with a nearer position, since he was going beyond the letter of his instructions in detaching Stirling at all

¹ See Chart, p. 336. The facts of this episode are taken from the *Log of the Diadem*, Popham's ship (*Captains' Logs*, 1743), and Allemand's *Journal*: Desbrière, v. 793. When Allemand captured the brig he was in 35° 50' N. and 11° 38' W. (= 9° 18' Greenwich). This was at 6 P.M. on the 11th. He then took "la bordée du nord-ouest en attendant une plus mûre réflexion." This course, if he continued it, would take him almost direct to Popham's noon position on the 17th (i.e. 39° 32' N. and 14° 12' W.), and on an average rate of sailing he cannot have crossed the British track much before the 13th, and it may have been later. His *Journal*, however, gives no entries for these days. Popham at this time had only the *Diadem* 64, *Belliqueux* 64, *Diomedé* 50, *Narcissus* 32, and the *Leda* 36. The latter he sent forward to Madeira on the 15th.

before his reinforcements arrived. All that we can say is that, had Barham's strategy been followed to the full, Allemand's squadron almost certainly must have been rendered incapable of further cruising. But, as it was, while Stirling moved away to rejoin Cornwallis, Allemand sat down undisturbed in the midst of the great trade fairway, coolly shifting spars and refitting his worst ships with such means as he had at his disposal. There he lay for four days with his cruisers and fastest seventy-fours spread, and on the 24th he found about a dozen sail in sight all round him making for the Channel. He gave chase, but next day his leading ship came back to report a squadron of eight of the line, and it was not till the following morning that he discovered the real nature of the chase.

It was, in fact, a small convoy from St. Helena, consisting of a single Indiaman, three South Sea whalers, two other merchantmen, and a damaged straggler from the West Indian convoy that had sought its protection. The escort was the *Calcutta*, an old East Indiaman that had been converted into a fifty-four, and she was then in command of Captain Woodruff, whose conduct richly deserves recording. Finding his pursuers were gaining, he ordered his convoy to disperse to the north and east, while he held back to engage the leading frigate. As the action began Woodruff held to the southward to try to draw the enemy away from his convoy. In this he was entirely successful. The frigate held off at long range to let a seventy-four come up, and Allemand, enraged to see how things were going, impetuously chased with his whole squadron. About sunset the seventy-four got in range and Woodruff furiously engaged her, but as she fired entirely at his rigging he was quickly disabled, though it was not till ten o'clock that he hauled down his flag, surrounded by the whole of Allemand's squadron.¹

¹ James, iv. 47. Allemand's *Journal*: Desbrière, iv. 795.

By this brilliant conduct Woodriff had led his pursuers into the area Stirling had just left. Had Stirling only remained where he was Allemand's daring cruise must still have been cut short, but as it was Woodriff had done enough. Not only had he saved all his convoy except the uninvited guest, but he had also saved the West Indian convoy which the *Illustrious* was bringing home. On the previous day Allemand's cruisers had fallen in with some of its stragglers, and brought in four of them richly laden the morning of the action. But Allemand, in his eagerness to capture the *Calcutta*, had chased far out of the convoy's real track. On the three following days four more stragglers were brought in, but the mass of the convoy, thanks to Woodriff's cunning, got safely home. Allemand's chief reward was the *Calcutta*, which he added to his squadron. Woodriff was, of course, court-martialled for his loss, but his trial was a mere excuse to give him and his company a kind of triumph.

Meanwhile Allemand, without perceiving it, had been watched. The *Moucheron*, one of the cruisers Cornwallis had sent to the westward, heard the firing. It was dead calm, but she made for the sound of the guns with her sweeps. During the night she got close to the squadron, and in the morning stood by and quietly counted them while Allemand was refitting the *Calcutta*. The *Moucheron* was apparently flying American colours. At all events Allemand took no notice of her, and having completed her reconnaissance she made off to Cornwallis.¹

But this was not all. One of Woodriff's whalers in escaping had fallen in with the Portugal convoy of thirty-three sail outward-bound, under escort of Commander Hawes in the *Aimable*. He immediately hauled off his natural course to give the enemy a wide berth, and pass nearer to

¹ *Moucheron's* Report, enclosed in Cornwallis to the Admiralty: *Instructions*, 129.

Cornwallis. The admiral must be warned, but he had nothing to send him but the *Diligent*, a valuable storeship for the Gibraltar garrison. Yet he determined to take the responsibility of detaching her, and so it was Cornwallis got the first news of what was going on.¹

At the moment she arrived, Cornwallis, finding everything quiet in Brest, and some of the ships refitting, was preparing to take his fleet into Falmouth to refresh, and he had just formed an inshore squadron of four of the line to remain on guard in his absence under Sir Richard Strachan.² Like Barham, he was still under the belief that Allemand must have made for some port to replenish. If so there would be plenty of time to blockade him, when he was located; and he had contented himself with detaching frigates to watch Rochefort, L'Orient, and Ferrol, besides those he had looking out to the westward.

It was early on September 29th that the storeship came in. Cornwallis immediately sent her on to Strachan to tell him to go in search of the enemy's squadron to the southward and escort the storeship across the Bay. No sooner, however, had he done so, than the *Moucheron* appeared to report that she had located the enemy, had fixed the squadron beyond doubt as Allemand's, and that she had left him lying quietly in the fairway, repairing rigging, and picking up everything that came by.

To be flouted in so impudent a manner in the heart of his own station was more than old "Billy-go-tight" could endure. So strongly did his paramount function now assert itself, that he boldly determined once more to leave Brest open and do himself what his detachment had failed to achieve. Ganteaume, or no Ganteaume, the control of the Channel approach must be secured. Strachan's orders

¹ Hawes's Report, *ibid.* He took the precaution of sending in a copy of the whaler's log, for the Admiral's information.

² *Cesar* 80, *Hero* 74, *Namur* 74, *Courageux* 74, and two frigates.

were allowed to stand, and away he went for Finisterre, while the Admiral, leaving a single frigate to keep an eye on Ganteaume, made a dash for the phantom squadron with all the rest of his fleet.

Heading straight for the point where the *Moucheron* had located it, he hunted up and down upon the scene of Allemand's depredations, but not a trace of him was to be had. After three days' work Cornwallis was convinced the wary French commodore must have got wind of him, and on the fourth day, having fallen in with the homeward-bound Portugal convoy, he decided to escort it into the Channel out of harm's way. This he did, and by October 8th was back again on his station off Ushant, and next day was reinforced up to his full strength.¹

The truth was that, by the time the *Moucheron* reached Ushant, Allemand had recognised that he had made the ground too hot to hold him. It was then four days since Woodriff's convoy had got away. Two days, he calculated, would see the news in England—two more would bring a squadron down upon him. He dared not linger another hour, and so with just judgment the very day Cornwallis began his dash at him, he was flying away to the southward for Vigo. Again he had struck his blow and was gone, with nine prizes for his reward.²

The whole episode is worthy of note as representing probably the utmost effect that can be hoped from raiding squadrons operating against trade. The only theatres in which such operations can count on making a real impression on the course of the war are the home terminals, and in a lesser degree, the oversea terminals and focal points. Allemand with a squadron, with which no amount of cruisers could hope to deal, had boldly chosen the home terminal and with every advantage in his favour. Our

¹ Cornwallis to Marsden, October 5th, 8th, and 9th: *In-letters*, 129.

² Allemand's *Journal*: Desbrière, iv. 795.

cruising system was still so imperfect, that it was a full week before he was located, and our home battle squadrons were fully occupied. And yet their mere presence in home waters made it impossible for him to hold his ground long enough to do vital damage. It was on this immutable principle that our trade protection had always been founded. It sprang from our geographical position, and must endure so long as that position endures. It goes to the root of our whole system of naval defence, and exposes the fallacy that any strength of military defence would alter it. If a battle fleet were not required in home waters to control the passage of a foreign army, it must still be there to control the home trade-terminals. No other sure system of trade protection has ever been devised—no patrolling of the seas can ever supply its place. The seas are wide—the trade routes are many, and so long as the point of convergence is safe, nowhere upon the high seas can an enemy hope in war time to encounter enough trade to make commerce destruction an adequate object for her battle squadrons.

The audacity and judgment with which Allemand had acted left nothing to be desired, and yet as a strategical operation his cruise had wholly failed in its object. Napoleon had designed it with confidence as a means of disturbing the British dispositions and forcing them to break their concentration; but so sure was the grasp of the essentials under Barham and his admirals that it had not availed for one moment even to loosen their grip. The raiding squadron had been ignored until the conditions permitted operations against it without prejudicing the security of the main positions. The whole affair, indeed, will serve to demonstrate the futility of seeking to entice our fleets away, so long as a sound strategical tradition remains green in the service.

Let us follow the intrepid and resourceful Allemand a little further, and see how his extraordinary luck pursued

him. He was now making for Vigo to renew his water and secure his prizes, and at the same time Strachan was racing across the Bay to cut him off at Finisterre. Strachan was there first. On October 4th he was some sixty miles north-west of the Cape, and thence he cast to and fro, always nearing the land. Nothing could have been more scientific than the means which Cornwallis had adopted to catch the elusive squadron, and yet again it escaped. How it happened we cannot tell, but it would seem that Allemand must have passed Strachan to seaward. At any rate, on the morning of October 9th Allemand sighted the *Agamemnon* 64. She was following Nelson down and was then about sixty miles due west of Finisterre, while Strachan at the same time was hovering about twenty-five miles to the north-north-west.¹ Allemand at once gave chase and pressed her so vehemently with his flagship that it was only by starting her water she escaped. So desperately, indeed, did Allemand push her that he was carried to leeward of his port.² Still nothing would hold him. Just as he abandoned the *Agamemnon* he saw to the southward the *Aimable* with the Portugal convoy which had eluded him in the mouth of the Channel. Regardless of consequences, he chased again still further to leeward of Vigo. The *Aimable* was within an ace of being captured. She too had to start her water, cut away her boats, and heave overboard a quantity of shot. Once she was on her beam ends with the press of sail she tried to carry, but at last she got away.

¹ The situation is by no means certain. Captain Sir Edward Berry, who commanded the *Agamemnon*, says at 3:30 A.M. Finisterre bore S.70. W., meaning probably magnetic. Allemand says he sighted her at 4:0 A.M. "ahead and pretty close," but he also says on the 7th he was 12 leagues from Vigo, that is, much further to the southward. The "12" must be an error of transcription. If he was so close to Vigo on the 8th he could not have seen the *Agamemnon* on the next day, and moreover he must have passed through Strachan's squadron the previous day.

² For Captain Sir E. Berry's despatch see Newbolt, *Year of Trafalgar*, p. 40, and Nicolas, vii. 117 note. Allemand thought he recognised the *Agamemnon* as the *Dragon*, "England's fastest ship."

The bulk of the convoy also escaped, and Allemand had nothing for his pains except three stragglers and a small letter of mark.¹

While the Rochefort squadron was thus brilliantly raiding Nelson's line of communications, Strachan was still hovering off Finisterre in ignorance that his chase had passed. Allemand was in fact lying-to nearly two hundred miles to the southward—trying to rally his scattered squadron and wondering what to do next. Scurvy had possession of his crews, and speedy relief was essential. To beat back to Vigo would take ten days at least, even if it were still open. An exaggerated report of Strachan's squadron had reached him. It was said to be ten of the line, and to be waiting for him off Ferrol. He suspected the *Agamemnon* when she escaped him had made for this squadron, and that he would find it had come down to bar his way to Vigo. Here again he showed his usual sagacity. Strachan had indeed got wind of him, though not from the *Agamemnon*, and that very day, October 10th, was moving down to Vigo, confident of bringing him to action as he returned. But Allemand was not so easily handled. There was still one more chance for him, and that was to run to the Canaries. This course he boldly took next day, leaving Strachan in hopeful patience covering the approaches to Vigo, while he himself sped southward without knowing he was on the heels of Popham and Baird.

¹ For an amusing account of the *Aimable's* escape by a newly-joined midshipman, see Newbolt, *Year of Trafalgar*, p. 40.

CHAPTER XXI

THE DEADLOCK AT CADIZ

It was on the evening of September 28th that Nelson reached the fleet off Cadiz, and on the morrow—his birthday—he took over the command. On his way down the Portuguese coast he had communicated with Lobb's cruiser line, and off Lisbon had issued directions that his arrival was to be kept secret. His mind, as usual, was occupied with making good the ground behind him, and guarding himself against the interruption of his line of communication by an escape of the Brest squadron. The possibility of such an escape during the equinoctial weather was a long-established strategical factor, and in view of the importance of securing the flow of his promised reinforcements, Nelson could not ignore the danger. Off St. Vincent he stopped a cruiser that was going home with Collingwood's despatches, and in accordance with the system he had recommended he ordered her to remain there to continue Lobb's line. Her instructions were to direct new arrivals to look for him "between Cape St. Mary and Cadiz," the rendezvous he had chosen. If they should find him gone in pursuit of the enemy, new orders would be found off Cape Spartel. "Should the enemy's fleet from Brest make its appearance," so the instructions concluded, "I desire you will join me with an account thereof with the utmost despatch." In this significant remark we probably have a reflection of the prevailing anxiety which had crippled Cornwallis's freedom of action, and by holding him to Ushant had given Allemand his opportunity.

From this point, moreover, Nelson sent forward an order by Blackwood that no notice was to be taken of him when he joined by salute or otherwise. His main preoccupation was still the difficulty of forcing Villeneuve to action, and his first precaution was, if possible, to conceal his arrival. He even begged General Fox at Gibraltar to forbid the publication of the news in the local press. "For I much fear," he wrote, "that if the enemy know of our increased numbers, we shall never see them out of Cadiz." On seeing how the Combined Fleet lay not in the bay, but crowded up in the harbour, he had hopes that possibly Colonel Congreve and his rockets might prove effective, if other means failed. "Even should no ships be burnt," he wrote to Castlereagh, "yet it should make Cadiz so very disagreeable that they would rather risk an action than remain in port."

But the pressure on which he had most faith was famine. This, however, could only be effected by a rigorous blockade of all the Andalusian ports into which Danish vessels had been pouring supplies from France. Now the Government for political reasons had a strong antipathy to these blockades. They never failed to have the effect of exasperating neutrals, and so strongly was this objection felt that only a short time since Lord Keith had been absolutely forbidden to close the North Sea ports through which Marmont's corps and the Dutch squadron and flotilla were being supplied.¹ Collingwood, however, had boldly taken the matter into his own hands, and established a blockade of the whole coast. Nelson resolved to continue it, and begged Castlereagh to support him and see that naval officers did not suffer for the execution of his order. Neutrals, he made free to hint, would take it

¹ Keith to Admiralty, July 12th: *In-letters*, 557. Barham minuted the letter that such a blockade as Keith suggested was a question for the Foreign Office, and the Minute was sent there accordingly and disallowed.

quietly enough if Ministers at home would only stop the abuse of granting licences for British vessels to enter the blockaded ports.

On starvation, then, and on concealing his force he relied principally for bringing Villeneuve to a decision. From the pressure of Craig's expedition he had no hope at all. He even yet did not know its object. When he sailed the situation at Naples was still too obscure for Ministers to say anything definite; but his ignorance of what it really portended was about to be enlightened. On September 17th, as Nelson was leaving the Channel, a courier arrived late at night at the Foreign Office with despatches that at last cleared the uncertainty. In his bag was Elliot's despatch from Naples announcing that Craig had reached Malta in safety, and that conferences for co-operation between him and the Russians were in full swing. Despatches from Craig were enclosed to say he would have at least 6000 men ready for action without denuding the Malta garrison. There was also a despatch from Vienna in which the ambassador said that as Cobenzl expected, Napoleon had refused the offer of mediation, his counter demands had been firmly rejected, the whole Austrian army had been placed on a war footing, and at any moment the Archduke Charles might strike a blow in Italy. For the Austrians were still persuaded the initiative would be theirs, and to the Archduke had been committed their main offensive movement against Napoleon's new kingdom.¹

Nothing could have been more opportune for Pitt. Exhausted by the strain of the recently-closed session, in which the opposition of Fox and his friends had been more implacable than ever, he felt unable to face Parliament

¹ *Foreign Office (Sicily)*, 25. Elliot to Mulgrave, August 1st (via Rome), endorsed, "Received Sept. 17th at night." Paget to same, August 29th and 30th, "most secret," received the same day: *Foreign Office (Austria)*, 74. Craig's despatches are in *War Office* (1) 280, July 20-1.

again on the same terms, and conduct the war as well. The only chance he saw was to form such a coalition with Fox, as his father had done so triumphantly with Newcastle in the crisis of the Seven Years' War. Party must cease for a time and a true national government take its place. Full of this idea, he had gone down to Weymouth, where the King was taking his accustomed spell of sea air guarded by two or three precious cruisers. But the stubborn old monarch proved as obdurate as ever. Nelson's friend Rose came down to help. "I told his Majesty," he wrote in his Diary, "that considering our situation in the House of Commons, I was perfectly persuaded, if Mr. Pitt should be confined by the gout or any other complaint for two or three weeks there would be an end of us." But it was no good. The King was so much upset by the bare idea of Fox in the Cabinet, that another attack of insanity was feared. They had to desist, and Pitt was left to face the prospect of yet another session, in which he would have to fight Fox all day and Napoleon all night.

In these circumstances news that held out a hope of striking a brilliant blow before the new session opened was in the highest degree inspiring, and in ten days the necessary action was decided on. On September 21st Castlereagh informed the Admiralty that in the event of hostilities on the Continent (which were now certain), Craig's force might be employed on the coast of Italy. He desired them, therefore, to call Nelson's attention to what was in the wind, and to direct him, "after providing effectually for the blockade of Cadiz, to keep in view the object of covering such operations as Sir James Craig may undertake from any interruption by the enemy's naval force in the Mediterranean," and to keep in constant communication with him.¹ Accordingly on the same day, secret

¹ Castlereagh to the Admiralty, September 21st: *In-letters (Sec. of State)*, 4200.

of war was now ordered to make the necessary reconnaissance. Barham, who believed as little in the rockets as he did in Sidney Smith, threw cold water on the scheme. If a military force was available he saw a far better objective against which it could be employed, and that was Villeneuve's fleet. He therefore submitted that if troops went at all they should go to Cadiz. Moore, however, reported privately to Pitt that the Boulogne enterprise was not a feasible military operation, and there it ended.¹

In the meantime, as we know, the problem of getting a decisive blow at Villeneuve, in which Barham and Nelson were absorbed, had been solved for them by Napoleon himself. As Nelson appeared at Cape St. Vincent the order directing the Combined Fleet to sail forthwith for Naples reached Cadiz. On hearing of it Gravina went on board Villeneuve's flagship, the *Bucentaure*, and announced that his fourteen ships were ready for sea. At Villeneuve's request he gave instructions that the Spanish dockyard was to render the French every possible assistance in completing their stores, while Villeneuve issued a stirring order. By the following Monday all troops necessary to fill up the ships' companies were to be on board, for on that day he meant to go forth and "to strike down England's tyrannical domination of the seas." The same evening, however, the signal stations reported that a three-decker and two seventy-fours were joining Collingwood from the westward.

¹ Maurice, *Diary of Sir John Moore*, ii. 109. Castlereagh to Moore, September 23rd. Barham to Castlereagh, September 25th. Pitt to same, October 6th. *Castlereagh Correspondence, 2nd Series*, i. 86-117; and Stanhope, *Life of Pitt*, iv. 337: "Walmer Castle, October 6th, 1805.—Dear Castlereagh,—You will have learned from General Moore the substance of what passed between him and me, which left me convinced that any attempt at landing is attended with too much risk to justify the experiment. I still entertain considerable hopes of something effectual being done, and I trust you will not have had much further difficulty in overcoming the objections both of Lord Keith and the Admiralty. Your answer to Lord Barham places the subject exactly in the true light. . . . With this wind I am much disappointed not to have heard of anything fresh from the Continent.—Ever sincerely yours, W. Pitt." See also *Barham Papers*, iii. pp. 155 *et seq.*

"That makes thirty-one," wrote Villeneuve, in a lower tone, "well known to be in the offing." Still it was not yet ascertained that it was Nelson who had come, and the embarkation of the troops proceeded. By October 2nd it was complete, but towards evening Gravina received two expresses from Lisbon by which the tone of confidence was severely shaken. They told that Nelson had arrived "with four of the line and great projects for attacking, bombarding, and burning the Combined Squadron." The effect was startling. At the cost of interrupting the preparations for sea a defence flotilla of gunboats, bomb-vessels, and anything that could be handled in bad weather was hastily organised and manned with officers and men from the fleet.¹ Moreover, instead of being able to get the ships out into the bay as they were ready, the fear of Nelson's doing something desperate made it advisable to keep them still crowded up in the harbour out of harm's way. Still Villeneuve proclaimed his intention of sailing the moment he had a fair breeze.

At Cadiz in fine autumn weather there is a land wind at night from the east, fair for coming out, while outside in the morning is found a westerly breeze fair for entering the Mediterranean. On the evening of the 7th an easterly breeze sprang up, and signal was made to prepare to weigh, but it was almost immediately annulled, for the wind increased so rapidly as to threaten a real Levanter "diametrically contrary to the course they had to make." Such is the story Villeneuve told officially.² But the truth would seem to be that Nelson's arrival had once more dominated the spirits of the French Admiral and most of his colleagues. Ever since he had joined nothing had been seen of the fleet from the signal stations except

¹ Escaño (Gravina's Chief of the Staff) to Don Enrique MacDonnell, Captain of the *Rayo*: Desbrière, *Trafalgar*, App. 98. There was another MacDonnell, a brigadier, in the fleet, who sat on the Council of War.

² Villeneuve to Decrès, Oct. 8th: *Ibid.*, p. 96.

an inshore squadron of five cruisers, with an occasional glimpse of communicating ships of the line. Nelson must be there, but what he was doing and what his strength no one could tell. "I could not close my ears," wrote Villeneuve in reporting to Decrès his arrested attempt to sail, "to the observations which came to me from all sides on the inferiority of our force compared with that of the enemy, who have now certainly from thirty-one to thirty-three of the line, of which eight are of three decks, and a large number of frigates. To go out in such circumstances is stigmatised as an act of desperation beyond the power of the two Courts." Accordingly he says he decided to call a Council of War. Escaño, who was still Gravina's Chief of the Staff, gives, however, another version of the calling of the Council which rings more true. According to him, Villeneuve informed Gravina the previous day that by superior orders he must put to sea the moment supplies were complete, and requested him to have his squadron ready. "The Spanish Admiral," says Escaño, "confined himself to replying that he considered it necessary before weighing to hold a Council to hear the opinion of all the Staff officers of both nations, but without further discussion he gave orders to demobilise the flotilla and for its officers to return to their ships."

On the following morning, therefore, a Council was held on board the *Bucentaure*. Villeneuve opened the proceedings by communicating the Emperor's secret orders, "that the Combined Fleet was to sail at the first favourable opportunity, and that wherever it found the enemy in inferior strength it was to attack him without hesitation in order to force him to a decisive action." On these instructions, so Escaño says, Villeneuve put it to the Council whether they should go to sea or remain at anchor in hopes the enemy would attack them, in which case they would probably be able to destroy them and obtain a free passage

out. The Spanish officers had been careful to discuss the question previously, and they unanimously supported Gravina's opinion that in view of the superiority of the British fleet Napoleon's orders did not bind them to seek an action at the moment, and that they ought to abide an attack at anchor. The Frenchmen, however, had not taken the same precaution, and a violent debate was the result, some of them hotly insisting that there could be no doubt they should go out and fight immediately. Captain Prigny, however, Villeneuve's Chief of the Staff, pointed out that even if there were no more than twenty-five of the enemy outside, still the Combined Fleet was not superior to them. "They," he said, "have kept the seas without intermission since 1793, while most of their own fleet have scarcely weighed anchor for eight years." He therefore urged the success that might be obtained with a well-organised defence flotilla, and concluded with the maxim that no superior order could bind them to attempt the impossible. Admiral Magon at once sprang up to refute the Chief of the Staff and the opinion of the Spanish officers, and expressed himself so hotly and in language so violent that a scene ensued. General Galiano, one of the brigadiers of the Spanish troops, got up to protest. The behaviour of the Frenchman was more, says Escaño, than his nice and lofty sense of honour could endure, and he demanded that Magon should be called upon to withdraw his offensive expressions. The Council was at once in a storm. Higher and higher it raged, till Gravina quelled it by moving suddenly that the question be put without further discussion. Thus it was he stated it: "Ought or ought not the Combined Squadron to put to sea, seeing that it was not in such superiority of force as to balance its inherent inferiority?" A vote was taken, and the result was a decision to remain at anchor. It was further agreed to re-establish the defence flotilla with contingents from

the fleet till a favourable opportunity for going out should occur.¹

Thus it was the Admirals tried to save Napoleon from his reckless determination to hurl his fleet upon Craig and the Russians; and it so happened that while the resolution of inability was being taken Nelson received from home the communication which for the first time explained to him the meaning of the expedition at Malta. The effect of the despatch was finally to clear his mind and to enable him at last to form a definite idea of the shape the campaign would thenceforth assume. It is certain at least that on receiving the news he changed his view of the enemy's probable action and fixed a plan of operations from which he never again swerved. To appreciate the point, it is necessary to grasp clearly the information he had previously and the dispositions he had made.

Newspapers of September 20th had already reached the fleet announcing that the Continental war was certain. There were also local rumours that Napoleon had ordered the Cadiz fleet to sea, and that in Council of War they had decided to disobey. Villeneuve, it was said, was to be superseded in consequence by Decrès.² Though the news could only strengthen the expectation that the Combined Fleet would soon put to sea, it gave little light on its objective. It was quite as likely it would be used for a diversion to the north or west as that it would act directly in the Mediterranean. Nelson, indeed, had been absorbed in arranging for the cruiser command of that sea, while his battle fleet was held to Cadiz, and had just sent home a memorandum of the minimum cruiser force that was required for the whole of his station.³ Between writing this de-

¹ "Procès-verbal du Conseil du guerre, &c.," and Escaño's letter to Captain MacDonnell: *Ibid.*, pp. 97-9.

² Bouchier, *Life of Codrington*, i. 53. Codrington wrote Duplex instead of Decrès.

³ Nicolas, vii. 85-6, 107. For the service of the battle fleet his requisition was for 8 frigates and 2 sloops, of which 2 frigates and 4 sloops were to

spatch, however, and the receipt of the new instructions concerning Craig, he made a significant change in his arrangements.

His first step on taking over the command had been to send Blackwood to recall Admiral Louis from before Cadiz. Collingwood had stationed him close in with an inshore squadron consisting of the *Queen* 98, the *Canopus* 80, and three seventy-fours. It was a normal feature of blockade, as it was then practised, of which Nelson did not approve, unless there were exceptional circumstances to justify it; and in this case the danger of a sudden westerly squall to an inshore squadron was a special reason for not employing one. The inherent advantage of the blockader is his power of concealing from the enemy his actual strength, position, and movements, and in Nelson's eyes full use should be made of this advantage. He had therefore decided to remove the whole of his battle fleet out of sight and to watch the port with a cruiser squadron only, which Blackwood was to command. The new disposition is significant. For it emphasises the growing expectation that the exigencies of the situation would force the enemy to sea if only they were given an apparent chance of escape. There was reason enough to believe they might make the attempt any day, for Blackwood from his inshore position had already reported that the troops were being embarked. Yet at the same time Nelson set about preparing for a long and exhausting watch. It was mainly a question of supply. A certain amount of the work could be done in fine weather on the spot from transports, but it was only by sending his ships away in batches to Gibraltar and Tetuan that he

keep open communication with Gibraltar and Lisbon. For observation and commercial blockade service he required 3 frigates at Cape Spartel, Cape St. Mary and the Salvages, and 2 sloops for Cape St. Vincent, as well as a frigate and a sloop off Cartagena. Besides these the officer in command at Gibraltar required 2 frigates and 3 sloops for the protection of the Straits, while for the rest of the Mediterranean were required 3 frigates and 6 sloops, besides the 3 frigates which formed Craig's escort.

could rely on keeping his stores and water up to the mark. To this embarrassing necessity he was no doubt reconciled and even bound by his instructions. For so long as there was an active squadron in Cartagena he must have something to watch it. He must guard against its interference up the Mediterranean or on the trade route through the Straits, to say nothing of the possibility of its slipping into Cadiz while the main British fleet was kept wide of the port. Accordingly on October 2nd, Louis, much against his will, was ordered to the Straits with his squadron and a small convoy which had arrived for Malta.

The position which Nelson himself decided to occupy was from sixteen to eighteen leagues west from Cadiz. In order to keep touch with the enemy he gave Captain Duff of the *Defence* an advanced squadron of four seventy-fours with which he was to maintain signal communication with Blackwood's cruiser squadron without getting in sight of the Spanish signal stations. "In fresh easterly breezes," he wrote to Blackwood, "I shall work up for Cadiz, never getting to the northward of it, and in the event of hearing they are standing out of Cadiz, I shall carry a press of sail to the southward towards Cape Spartel and Arrache."¹

Such were his ideas and intentions before he received the information about Craig, that is, he expected the enemy to sail with the first easterly wind. On the 5th the wind did come easterly, and in view of Louis's detachment Nelson began to be seriously anxious for his promised reinforcements from home, and in writing to Barham to explain what he had done he urged the importance of annihilating

According to Lieutenant (afterwards Admiral Sir Humphrey) Senhouse the general idea in the fleet was that Nelson chose his position with the following objects: "In the first place to give the enemy a chance of escape; next to prevent our fleet being driven through the Straits of Gibraltar in the winter westerly gales . . . and lastly to be ready to intercept the Brest fleet, should they have endeavoured to form a junction with the fleet at Cadiz before the latter could arrive to the assistance of the former."—*Macmillan's Magazine*, vol. 81, p. 415.

the enemy and not merely "spoiling their voyage." To Rose he wrote next day more strongly. "I am *very very very* anxious," he said, "for its arrival, for the thing will be done if a few more days elapse. . . . It is, as Pitt knows, annihilation that the country wants. . . . Numbers can only annihilate (*sic*). Therefore I hope the Admiralty will send the fixed force as soon as possible."¹

Blackwood's information that the troops were embarking was at the bottom of Nelson's anxiety, and he sent it on to Collingwood together with his own doubts as to what the enemy meant to do. Collingwood, with his fresh experience of the station, seized the opportunity to hint to his chief that his appreciation was incorrect and his anxiety premature. "Now, my lord," he wrote, with a striking penetration of Villeneuve's mind, "I will give your lordship my ideas on the subject. . . . If they are to sail with an easterly wind, they are not bound for the Mediterranean, and your lordship may depend upon it the Cartagena squadron is intended to join them. If they effect that—and with a strongly easterly wind they may—they will present themselves to us with forty sail. If by any good fortune Louis was to fall in with that squadron I am sure he would turn them to leeward . . . and a French ensign might bring them to us. Whenever the Cartagena people were expected they lit the light-house. Captain Blackwood should look to that as a signal."²

Now it was on the following day that Nelson received

¹ To the Right. Hon. Sir George Rose, Oct. 6. In view of the fact that this letter is often cited as evidence of Nelson's preference for a number of units as against individual force, it should be noted that what he is pressing Rose for, is "the fixed force." Now besides the *Victory* and *Royal Sovereign* and the two seventy-fours which he had brought out, the fixed force which he was expecting included the *London* and *Barfleur* 98's, the *Agamemnon* 64, and *Belleisle* 74. Thus of eight units half were three-deckers. (To Blackwood, Oct. 8 and 9, Nicolas vii. 88 and 96.) In his official letter to Barham, he says nothing about "numbers," but only "the ships from England" (Oct. 5. *Ibid.*, p. 75). The expression used to Rose clearly proves nothing either way, if read with its context.

² Nicolas, vii. 81 *note*.

the news of Craig's intended operations in Italy. The despatch came out in the *Royal Sovereign*. She joined on October 8th, spick and span after her refit for Collingwood's flag, and though the easterly wind continued to blow, Nelson's immediate anxiety passed away. With Craig's instructions in his hand it is clear he had no longer any doubt that Villeneuve was destined for the Mediterranean, and Collingwood's appreciation had convinced him the enemy would not sail with the wind at east. This view he now adopted, and the characteristic tenacity and singleness of mind with which he clung to it was evinced at once. It so happened that the day after Louis parted company, Blackwood informed him by signal that the enemy's troops were embarked, and that they intended to sail on the first easterly wind. As the wind had then come east Louis decided to send on his convoy with two of his squadron and to return to Nelson with the rest. "But Lord Nelson," so James tells us, "conceiving the whole to be a stratagem to draw him nearer to Cadiz for the purpose of obtaining a more accurate knowledge of his force, ordered the Rear-Admiral to proceed in the execution of his orders."¹

Louis, therefore, much to his own and his captain's disgust, had again to part company, and in accordance with Nelson's new view of the situation fresh instructions were sent to Blackwood. His squadron had just been made up with new arrivals to its full strength of five frigates and two sloops. "Those," Nelson wrote to him, "who know more of Cadiz than either you or I do, say that after these Levanters come several days of fine weather—sea breezes westerly, land wind at night—and if the enemy are bound for the Mediterranean they will come out at night . . . run to the southward and catch the sea breezes at the mouth of the Gut and push through while we have little wind in the

¹ Hubback, *Jane Austen's Sailor Brothers*, p. 149; James, *Naval History*, iv. 380; Log of the *Canopus*. Blackwood had the information from a Swede.

offing." He was therefore to take measures to ensure detecting any such movement, and was furnished with special long-distance night-signals to give warning.

As for the battle squadron, Nelson was now quite clear what to do with it. "At present," he wrote to Collingwood, "I am sure the Mediterranean is their destination. . . . Should the enemy move . . . it is then probable that I shall make the signal to bear up and steer for the entrance of the Straits."¹ At the same time all arrangements were completed for the expected action. It was now he issued his order of battle and the famous plan of attack—the "Nelson touch" as he called it—which hitherto he had only explained verbally to his captains when they assembled to greet him on his taking over the command.²

Then for a week all was quiet, save for the painful duty of sending Calder home for his trial and the passing disturbance which Allemand created. On the 13th Sir Edward Berry joined in the *Agamemnon*, bringing news of his narrow escape, and the same evening Calder parted company. The belief was that Allemand was still to the northward about Vigo, and Nelson was in some anxiety lest Calder should fall into his hands. To have such a squadron on his communications with home was far from pleasant. He had full particulars of Allemand's force and its proceedings from a French officer who had been taken in a recapture by one of the ubiquitous Guernsey privateers. Further intelligence was brought in by the *Diligent*, the store ship which had informed Cornwallis of Allemand's presence in the Soundings. Strachan had escorted her well to the southward till she was safe in Lobb's hands, and he was now quietly cruising off Vigo for Allemand's superior squadron, under the belief it was somewhere close to him and about to make

¹ *Nicolas*, vii. 110, October 10th.

² For both these documents, see *post*, p. 392, and *Appendix D*, p. 496. It is worth noting that had Villeneuve come out when Nelson first expected him the Memorandum would not have been ready.

the port.¹ Nelson was naturally far from easy about him. "I wish he were stronger," he wrote to Blackwood on the 14th, "but I am sure he will spoil their cruising;" and again to Collingwood on the 17th, "I wish he had a good three-decker with him."²

For the rest he was busy with the problem of controlling Italian waters, difficult enough in itself without the disturbance on his communications. The *Agamemnon* had brought out a repetition of his instructions for co-operating with Craig, and the expedition was much in his mind. He had already informed the Admiralty he must have three cruisers besides those he originally asked for, if he was to keep up communication with the expeditionary force. He was now very anxious to send a squadron of ten of the line to his own old station, but till Villeneuve was dealt with this was impossible, and all he could hope for—and that not immediately—was a strong cruiser squadron which he intended to place under Keats of the *Superb*. Still, so deeply was he concerned with the importance of supporting Craig that he did take the extreme step of sending Louis an order to escort the Malta convoy past Cartagena before he rejoined.³ At this time he seems to have had little expectation of the enemy's putting to sea. He was preparing bomb-vessels and looking for the arrival of fire-ships, as well as Congreve and Francis with their rockets and torpedoes to force things to an issue.⁴ But his hope of a decision rested mainly as before

¹ Log of the *Cesar*.

² Nicolas, vii. 121 and 126-7-9. On the same day, the 18th, we have another ray of light on Nelson's regard for three-decked ships. Collingwood, in discussing what ships should receive water from the water-ships, says, "I suppose your lordship would wish the three-deckers to be filled up well." —*Ibid.*, note. This seems to put force before numbers.

³ Hubback, *Jane Austen's Sailor Brothers*, p. 152. Louis received the order by a frigate at Tetuan on the 17th. He also at this time sent the *Donegal* 74 into Gibraltar "for a ground-tier of casks."

⁴ "Mr. Francis" was the famous American, Robert Fulton. He had invented a torpedo, designed to be fixed to the cable of a ship in a tideway, when it would swing under her and be exploded by clockwork. It had lately been tried with success experimentally.

on the slow pressure of famine and little on the stimulus of the Anglo-Russian threat in South Italy. There is no reference to it in Nelson's correspondence, though he must have discussed it with Collingwood. We know at least that on this ground Collingwood regarded Villeneuve's continued inaction as inexplicable. "It is very extraordinary," he wrote to Nelson on the 18th, "the people in Cadiz do not make some movement. If they allow the war to begin in Italy, they cannot hereafter make up for the want of assistance they might give in the first instance."¹

Once more Collingwood showed his power of penetration. His vision of what was stirring inside Cadiz could not have been more just. As he wrote the hour had come.

The resolution which the Council of War had first taken was just the kind of thing that Napoleon expected, and the precautions he adopted to meet it, acted even more promptly than he planned. On October 12th, four days after the Council of War, Admiral Rosily reached Madrid on his way to supersede Villeneuve. The posting system had broken down, the roads beyond Cordova were infested with brigands, and the French Ambassador warned him not to proceed till arrangements could be made for his travelling in safety. It was ten days' journey on to Cadiz, but in half that time word came to Villeneuve that Rosily had reached the capital. Guessing in a moment what it meant, and without saying a word to any one, on the 18th, as Collingwood was writing the letter just quoted, he suddenly ordered Magon with seven of the line and a frigate to proceed to sea at dark and endeavour to capture Blackwood's squadron and find out what was behind it. Before, however, the order was executed, word came in by telegraph of Louis's detachment at Gibraltar. The news was that the convoy which had been waiting there for escort, had sailed eastward in charge of four of the line, and that two others

¹ *Nelson Papers, Add. MSS.* 34968.

were said to be in the port.¹ Villeneuve's inference was that Nelson must be six of the line short. Now if ever was his time. There was no wind and little sign of it, but he was desperate, and without consulting any one he made the general signal to prepare to weigh.²

¹ One of these was the *Donegal* 74, which Nelson had just sent in there, "being obliged to go into the Mole for two days." Nelson to Collingwood, Oct. 19th : *Nicolas*, vii. 127. The other may have been the *Zealous* 74, which, with the *Endymion* 40 ("both being crippled ships"), Louis had originally sent on with the Malta convoy.

² Villeneuve to Decrès, Oct. 18th (two letters) : Desbrière, *Trafalgar*, App. 101-2.

CHAPTER XXII

THE MAIN FLEETS IN CONTACT

"ENEMY have their topsail yards hoisted." At six o'clock in the morning of October 19th the signal fluttered from the *Sirius*, the nearest frigate inshore; and then at seven the long-awaited No. 370. It meant "The enemy's ships are coming out of port or getting under sail." In ten minutes Blackwood passed it on to the *Phœbe*, which he kept to the westward. As the light grew, they got it through to the *Mars*, Duff's easternmost ship, and by half-past nine Nelson had it. He was then nearly fifty miles to the westward of Cadiz. Without a moment's hesitation or waiting to form order of sailing he gave the word for "General chase, south-east," and shortly afterwards made the signal to prepare for battle.¹

Meanwhile Blackwood had despatched one of his two sloops to the *Victory* and the other to warn Louis, while he

¹ There has been some confusion about Nelson's exact position when he got the signal. He says in his Diary: "Wind at South, Cadiz bearing E.N.E. by compass (i.e. magnetic) 16 leagues." The variation as recorded in the log of the *Montanes* was 20° West (Desbrière, *Trafalgar*, App. 374). E.N.E. magnetic was therefore about N.E. true. On a south wind he could not sail south-east true, nor from a position 16 leagues true S.W. of Cadiz could he make the Straits on that course. The signal he used was the single flag with two guns and the S.E. compass flag, and it meant "The whole fleet to chase in the S.E. quarter." The course required was a little south of east, i.e. in the south-east quarter. Probably, however, Nelson's position is wrong, for the noon position in the *Victory's* log is 36° 36' N. 7° 30' W., which makes Cadiz bear about 19 leagues E.S.E. magnetic and about E. true, that is, his regular position. From this point a south-east course led into the Straits' mouth. There is nothing to show Nelson had changed the position of the fleet, and probably therefore he wrote "E.N.E." for "E.S.E." by mistake. According to the *Téméraire's* log the course was first E. by S. and wind S. by E., and afterwards S.E. by E. on a W.S.W. wind.

himself watched the enemy struggling to get out of the harbour on the faint land breeze. By three o'clock a signal came through from him that the enemy's fleet was at sea, though in truth it was only Magon's division that as yet was outside. Nelson held on his way. The movement to cut off Villeneuve from the Straits was that which he had settled from the time he had learnt from the Government how much rested upon Craig's operations, but he had also in view an immediate object of his own. The recent easterly wind let him hope that he might find Louis coming out of the Straits to give him his whole fleet in hand for the final decision.¹ As evening closed down, in order to ensure his purpose as far as possible he formed the "Advance Squadron," for which in accordance with Mediterranean practice his tactical Memorandum provided. A division of eight two-deckers was placed under Captain Duff of the *Mars*, five of them to look out ahead and the rest to continue to keep signal touch with Blackwood's cruisers.² The rest of his fleet, according to the regular practice, were to observe the Admiral's motions closely during the night, as he would probably manœuvre without signals. At the same time he

¹ Nelson to Collingwood, October 18th and 19th: *Nicolas*, vii. 127, 129. No instructions to Louis have been found, but Nelson says he told him "as easterly wind must not be lost," even if the convoy had to wait for the next detachment.

² An Advance Squadron was established in the Mediterranean fleet as early as 1790. It was not Nelson's idea, and was borrowed probably from the French. See *Signals and Instructions* (*Navy Record Society*), pp. 72-3. The composition of the Division in this case is uncertain. Codrington in a letter to his wife (*Life*, i. 57) says: "The above four (*Agamemnon*, *Defence*, *Colossus*, and *Mars*) and as many more of us are now to form an advanced squadron, and I trust by morning we shall all be united [*i.e.* with Louis] and in sight of the enemy." He also says his own ship, *Orion*, and the *Belleisle*, were amongst those that went ahead. *Defence* and *Agamemnon* were nearest Cadiz, with *Mars* and *Colossus* as connecting ships. *Téméraire* records a signal (No. 155) to *Belleisle*, *Orion*, *Leviathan*, *Polyphemus*, and *Bellerophon*, "to keep a look-out ahead during the night at a convenient distance for intercourse by night signals, carrying a light in the stern."—*Masters' Logs*, 3706. Colonel Owen, who then commanded the Marines in the *Belleisle*, also says five were sent forward.—Allen, *Memoirs of Sir W. Hargood*, p. 137. There must therefore have been nine pennants in the squadron—that is, one-third of the force with Nelson's flag—an unusually large proportion.

superseded "General chase" by signalling for the order of sailing; but as during recent exercises three of his seven three-deckers, *Britannia*, *Prince*, and *Dreadnought*, had proved very bad sailers, he directed them to take station as convenient.¹ The point should be noticed as the first step in the process of disintegration which his "Order of battle" and "Plan of attack" were to suffer, as the actual tactical conditions of the occasion developed themselves to his elastic mind.

At one o'clock in the morning, having attained his desired position, he hove-to, and at dawn found himself in sight of Gibraltar between Capes Trafalgar and Spartel, that is, in the entrance to the Straits. In the growing light every eye was strained for a sight of Louis's squadron, but not a sign of it was to be seen. The truth was that his return to Nelson after he had first started and the prevailing easterly winds had prevented his reaching Gibraltar for five days after he received his orders, and it was not till the 15th that he was able to complete his water and victuals at Tetuan. This done he hurried away to rejoin Nelson, but meeting a westerly wind, was forced back to Tetuan, and there on the 17th, before he could sail again, the order reached him to see the Malta convoy forward. The result was that he missed Blackwood's sloop, and when Nelson was looking for him between Spartel and Trafalgar he was two hundred miles away and still going to the eastward. Nor was it till the 21st of famous memory that in accordance with the usual practice he dismissed the convoy off Cape Tenez and stood back towards Cartagena to cover its further progress.² Thus after all the practically inert Cartagena squadron, though it failed to make any movement which Napoleon had designed for it, did avail in the hour of crisis to break

¹ *Private Diary*, Nicolas, vii, 133, and *Téméraire's Signal Log, Masters' Logs*, 3706. A curious effect of this order was that the French believed these three ships had been formed into an *Escadre d'observation*.

² *Log of the Queen*. Hubback, *Jane Austen's Sailor Brothers*, p. 152.

the vital British concentration. A more significant instance could not be found of how much more difficult to deal with is a purely expectant attitude at sea than on land. It is a radical and far-reaching difference between naval and military strategy, due mainly to the exigencies of commerce protection.

Disappointing as it was to Nelson's men that Louis was nowhere to be seen, there was a worse trouble to disturb them. An action had been expected confidently at dawn, but Villeneuve was nowhere to be seen. The sun rose stormily; the fine weather had passed; it was thick and wet, with a very short range of visibility. In breathless impatience they scoured the mist, but look as they would there was not a sign of the enemy anywhere. What had become of them? "All our gay hopes are fled," wrote Codrington to his wife that morning, "and instead of being under all sail in a very light breeze and fine weather, expecting to bring the enemy to battle, we are under close-reefed topsails in a very stormy wind with thick rainy weather and the dastardly French we find returned to Cadiz." This belief must have been a mere inference from their not being in sight. "Had they persevered," he added, "we should certainly have come up with them from the decisive dash we made for the Gut of Gibraltar."¹ Where could they be if not in Cadiz? One thing at least was clear. In such foul weather as was blowing up, the fleet could not stay where it was. "I must guard," Nelson had written to Barham, "against being caught with a westerly wind near Cadiz, as a fleet of ships with so many three-deckers would inevitably be forced into the Straits."² Accordingly, so soon as it was light enough to be sure how things stood, he decided to make use of the stiff south-south-west wind to get back towards his old station.

Scarcely had he made the decision when one of Black-

¹ Bouchier, *Life of Codrington*, i. 58.

² Nicolas, vii. 75.

wood's frigates hove in sight flying the welcome signal that the enemy bore to the north. Nelson immediately signalled for the order of sailing, and about an hour later hove the *Victory* to and summoned Collingwood on board to consult him. Collingwood, it is said, was for making an immediate attack, but this was not to Nelson's mind. We can only guess his reason. It may have been that he felt Collingwood's plan would mean engaging too late in the day and too near Cadiz to ensure a decisive battle, and yet the wind was fair to carry him rapidly into action. What he did was to reform order of sailing and to stand on again north-west under easy sail as though to entice Villeneuve to attempt to pass him inshore.¹

At the same time he summoned Duff and two of his captains, and instructed them to keep contact with Blackwood and the enemy. Then without recalling the rest of the Advance Squadron into the line, he held on the course he had chosen, presumably to avoid premature contact or a premature disclosure of his force. By noon it had brought him some twenty miles south-west of Cadiz. Blackwood's second sloop by this time had communicated, and informed him that she had seen forty sail coming out the previous evening, but this still left the enemy's conduct a mystery. In the afternoon, however, Blackwood telegraphed a message which put a clearer aspect on the situation, and seemed to account for the enemy's not having been caught at the Strait's mouth. It was that they appeared determined to

¹ Dr. Beatty says: "At 8 o'clock the *Victory* hove-to, and Admiral Collingwood . . . came on board to receive instructions." Codrington related the incident thus: "On the Sunday morning Lord Nelson, as a compliment to Collingwood, called him on board by signal to consult with him, saying to Hardy jocosely that he should not be guided by his opinion unless it agreed with his own; and upon asking him, Collingwood gave his opinion in favour of attacking the fleet immediately. Lord Nelson, however, kept to his plan of waiting till he could get them further off, as they did not seem determined to return to Cadiz but to persevere in their original intentions," &c. This was one of the passages which Codrington dictated to his daughter Lady Bouchier many years later.—*Life of Codrington*, i. 59.

go to the westward. "And that," wrote the Admiral in his diary, "they shall not do, if in the power of Nelson and Bronté to prevent them." The course he was steering, whether by intention or not, was exactly what was wanted. He therefore held on as he was till two o'clock, when the fleet was taken aback by a sudden shift of wind into the west-north-west. The sailing order was thrown into confusion, and all movement was checked till he could restore his formation.

If the mystery of Villeneuve's intention was hard to fathom, it was no wonder, for the true explanation of his not having been found in the Strait's mouth lay in circumstances beyond his control. Blackwood was understood to have reported that the whole allied fleet had got to sea on the evening of the 19th, but in fact its seamanship had proved unequal to the task in the light airs that prevailed. It was not till nearly noon on the 20th that Villeneuve had the whole of his force well under way. His intention, as Nelson divined, had actually been to make direct for the Mediterranean, but outside he had met the southerly wind shifting to the south-west on which Nelson under easy sail was reaching back from the Straits, and he had been compelled, as Blackwood had reported, to stand to the westward. On this course he began laboriously to form his order of sailing.

His organisation was based on the old tactical idea of "equalising the line," and using the surplus units as a *corps de reserve*. Believing that after Louis's departure Nelson would have only twenty of the line with his flag, he formed a *corps de bataille* of that number, in three divisions under his immediate command. With the remaining twelve he constituted an *escadre d'observation* in two divisions, which, like Nelson's Advance Squadron, was to be employed as a reserve. Gravina was in command of it, and his instructions on the time-honoured plan were to keep somewhat ahead and to windward, so as to be able to succour any part of the

fleet upon which the enemy should concentrate. Seeing that Villeneuve was convinced that Nelson would adopt the principle of concentration, the organisation was well conceived for dealing with it, had only the power of execution been equal to the design. But in the shifting squalls that prevailed, the lack of cohesion in the allied fleet and its defects in seamanship became more and more apparent. So unhandy was the manœuvring that for three hours the cumbrous fleet laboured in vain to attain its formation. About four o'clock the wind came westerly. The sailing order was still far from being formed, but regardless of consequences Villeneuve felt compelled to seize the opportunity of getting to the southward, and he signalled to wear together. The confusion that ensued was almost hopeless, and after wearing the effort to form the order of sailing continued more laboriously than ever. The evolution was only possible by forming on the ships furthest to leeward, so that although Villeneuve tried to keep close-hauled on the starboard tack and steer to the west-south-west as though to weather Nelson or get a good offing for entering the Straits, his mean course must have been about south, and he was reported thus by the British frigates about nightfall.

If Villeneuve was in trouble with his fleet, it was little wonder, for after the shift of wind Nelson himself took two hours to restore his order of sailing.¹ He did it by coming to the wind on the starboard tack, so that the fleet was now heading about south-west. But towards four o'clock—that is, when Villeneuve was wearing his fleet—Nelson was doing the same, but on the opposite or port tack. Whether he knew the enemy had gone about is doubtful. There is no trace of the movement having been reported to him. The *Euryalus* had run down to the battle squadron and was signalling direct to the *Victory*, but was not in sight

¹ Hardy's Journal: *Captains' Logs*, 414.

of the enemy; and the last signal she had made was that their leading ship bore to the north of him.¹ The effect of the British movement was to give the fleet a course very little west of north, so that Nelson must have known he was steering direct to meet his enemy. Indeed, the weather had cleared so much with the westerly wind that before sundown several of the enemy could be seen from the mast-head close in to Cadiz.²

Is it possible after all that he was thinking of engaging that evening? It is not probable. An officer present tells us, that the general impression in the fleet was that the enemy did not mean to go back into Cadiz, but that, seeing they had remained at sea in face of the blustery weather, it was evident they were going to attempt to escape at the risk of an action. True, it was at this time that Nelson finally concentrated his fleet. At sunset the whole of the Advance Squadron, except the two or three connecting ships, were reabsorbed into the order of sailing.³ He was also in the most favourable position for delivering the attack which the Memorandum laid down, and we know it was a favourite idea of his to approach directly end-on, so that the enemy could not tell whether he meant to engage to windward or leeward.⁴ If he did contemplate engaging, it must have been in a night action, and this was what Villeneuve was expecting. But he cannot in fact have had

¹ Log of *Euryalus*: *Great Sea Fights*, ii. 167. "At 4.10 to Victory, No. 413, north, two guns." This was an MS. addition in the Signal Book. It appears in a copy belonging to Captain Hope, R.N., with this signification: "The leading ship of the enemy's line bears on the point of the compass shown herewith." *Euryalus*' time was about three-quarters of an hour ahead of *Victory*'s. By *Victory*'s time the signal would have been made about 3.30. *Euryalus*' log gives it as 4.10. *Téméraire* says *Naiad* made it at 3.34.

² Lieutenant Senhouse to his mother: *Macmillan's Magazine*, vol. 81, p. 416. The writer was afterwards Admiral Sir Humphrey Senhouse. For his authority as a critic of the action, see *post*, p. 382 n.

³ See Colonel Owen's letters. Allen: *Memoirs of Hargood*, p. 138.

⁴ See his earlier Memorandum, *Fighting Instructions*, p. 315. "The other mode would be to stand under an easy but commanding sail directly for their headmost ship, so as to prevent the enemy from knowing whether I should pass to windward or to leeward of him."

any such intention. For when he absorbed the Advance Squadron into the fleet, he telegraphed to Blackwood that he relied on him and his cruiser squadron to keep touch during the night, and at eight o'clock, just as Villeneuve in fear of an immediate attack was signalling for the line of battle as convenient, he wore away again seawards—that is, to the south-west.¹ He must therefore have been bent on encouraging the enemy to make their expected attempt to escape, and by keeping to windward of them to ensure it should not succeed.

This movement was accurately followed by all the fleet except one vessel, a chance that was to have a curious effect for good on the coming battle. The *Africa* 64 apparently did not take in the signal, and held on to the northward till she lost touch.² For eight hours Nelson held this course under easy sail, Blackwood keeping him hourly informed of the enemy's position through the connecting ships of the line. At four o'clock in the morning, with the wind at west-north-west, he wore again "to the north-east," he himself says, but the *Victory's* Log gives the course more accurately as north by east, and this was maintained through the night.

The effect of these movements had been to annul the Order of Sailing. Indeed, it would seem that in those days when fleets were not accustomed to cruise in regular formation, the sailing order was seldom preserved after dark, and especially as in this case when there had been any manœuvring during the night. At daybreak accordingly the fleet was in no regular formation. Collingwood was apparently about the van of his division, but Nelson

¹ It was already dark, and he used No. 31 of the Night Signals, and began, after his custom, to burn blue lights to indicate his position: *Téméraire's* Signal Log.

² See Lieutenant Senhouse to his mother, October 27th: "The *Africa*, who had parted in the night": *Macmillan's Magazine*, 1900. She was not sent to scout ahead, as is sometimes stated.

was not. Most of his ships had stretched ahead of him, and what the French saw when it was light enough was a confused mass of vessels "in no particular order" stretching about south-east and north-west, with the two flagships near each other about the centre.¹

The fleets were now bearing from one another about south-west and north-east, and some eight or nine miles apart. Shortly after six it was light enough for each to see the other, and what Nelson made out was the Combined Fleet in no distinguishable formation steering for the Straits. The moment of his life and of the campaign had come. What should he do? Should he carry out the attack, as he had laid it down, or should he not? What in these first minutes of the waxing light was the thought that held uppermost in his mind? Death has robbed us of the answer. We can only glean the fragments that lie scattered upon those hallowed waters and bid them tell us, if they will, the golden secret.

¹ See Reports of the various commanders in Desbrière's *Trafalgar*, and particularly the plan attached to that of Prigny, Chief of the Staff (*post*, p. 360). The confusion of the British fleet is shown by the entries in the logs of how the enemy bore. *Victory* has E. to E.S.E.; *Royal Sovereign* has E.S.E. to E. by N., and must therefore have been little south of *Victory*; *Britannia* E.S.E., ahead of Nelson; *Téméraire* S.E., still further ahead; *Neptune* E. by S., close to *Victory*. *Dreadnought* of Collingwood's division saw them E.N.E., and was S.W. of *Victory*—that is, to windward instead of leeward. *Spartiate* of Nelson's division saw them N.N.E.; *Conqueror* N.E.—both therefore correctly astern of him, as were also *Minotaur* and *Agamemnon*; but *Ajax* and *Africa* were ahead.

CHAPTER XXIII

NELSON'S PLAN OF ATTACK

THE old and much-disputed question, whether Nelson did or did not attack in accordance with the Memorandum, dates from the morrow of the action. Some officers, in every way equipped for a right judgment, held that he did; others equally well equipped assumed the contrary as a fact beyond dispute.¹

Collingwood passes shyly over the question, and leaves it practically untouched. All he says in his official despatch is that—"as the mode of attack had been previously determined on and communicated to the flag-officers and captains, few signals were necessary," and yet it is certain many were made. Two months afterwards, in a private letter to Sir Thomas Pasley, he wrote that the plan which Nelson had determined to adopt was executed well and succeeded admirably. But what did he mean by the plan? Earlier in the letter he explains it thus: "Lord Nelson determined to substitute for exact order an impetuous attack in two distinct bodies. The weather line he commanded, and left the lee line totally to my direction. He had assigned the points to be attacked." But no one will assert that this is an adequate summary of the plan of the Memorandum. It conveys little more than the impression of an attack by divisions in "General Chase." The distinctive idea is barely indicated, and it entirely ignores the subtle method of engaging by which Nelson intended to realise that idea.

¹ For the text of the Memorandum, see *post*, *Appendix D*, p. 496.

Collingwood therefore was saying at most that the general intention of an attack in two independent divisions was carried out. It need not, however, be assumed from this that Collingwood did not appreciate the niceties of the Memorandum. The chivalrous loyalty of his nature would not in any case permit him to say more, and in everything he wrote of the action we can read between the lines a lofty determination to ignore any detail which might be turned even remotely to detract from the glory of his dead friend or to suggest in any degree that the victory was not entirely Nelson's.

Captain Harvey of the *Téméraire*, who was Nelson's second in the line, is equally general, and yet the Log of the ship shows that he was by far the most detailed and methodical observer of the action. "It was noon," he wrote, "before the action commenced, which was done according to the instructions given us by Lord Nelson." Whether by "the instructions" he meant the written "Plan of Attack," or the verbal instructions passed down the line during the approach, every one must judge for himself. It is certainly impossible to assert beyond the possibility of contradiction that he meant the "Plan of Attack." The other two witnesses for the affirmative are equally vague. Thirty years after the event, Codrington said he could remember calling the attention of his first lieutenant to Nelson's movements as he came into action, remarking, "How beautifully the Admiral is carrying his design into effect;" but a week after the action he wrote to a Lord of the Admiralty, "We all scrambled into battle as soon as we could."¹ Lastly, there is the fact that Captain Hope of the *Defence* endorsed on his copy of the Memorandum: "It was agreeable to these instructions that Lord Nelson attacked the combined fleets of France and Spain." This appears to exhaust the affirmative evidence such as it is, and so far as it is known at present.

¹ To Lord Garlies, Oct. 28th: Bouchier, *Life of Codrington*, i. 60 and 77.

The negative testimony is richer and far more explicit. Captain Moorsom of the *Revenge*, in Collingwood's division, said: "A regular plan was laid down by Lord Nelson before the action, but not acted on;" and again, "Admiral Collingwood dashed directly down, supported by such ships as could get up, and went directly through their line. Lord Nelson did the same, and the rest as fast as they could." In his opinion, then, there was no difference in the way the two divisions engaged. Both made an almost perpendicular attack—that is, the two lines went "directly down" instead of getting into the designed position parallel to the enemy's line and then hauling to the wind.¹ His son, Admiral Constantine Moorsom, who earned himself a rare reputation as a scientific student of tactics, went further. In his *Principles of Naval Tactics*, the only original treatise on the subject which the service had produced, he wrote, that "there was an entire alteration both of the scientific principle and of the tactical movements."²

The only fully reasoned criticism which we have from the pen of an officer who was present is to the same effect. It was written about 1820 by Admiral Sir Humphrey Senhouse, who served in the battle as a lieutenant in Israel Pellew's ship, the *Conqueror*, an officer who highly distinguished himself in the later years of the war and was afterwards flag-captain, both in the Channel and the Mediterranean.³ His criticism was based on the then

¹ Captain Moorsom to his father, November 1st, 1805: *Great Sea Fights*, ii. 242. In this letter he says, "We kept going down in two columns, pointing to their centre nearly in this manner," and then in the original he gives a rough diagram showing the two British columns parallel with one another, and nearly vertical to the enemy's line. See *post*, Appendix E, p. 504.

² *The Principles of Naval Tactics, exemplified with Tables for facilitating the several evolutions.* By Captain C. R. Moorsom, R.N. London, 1843.

³ This remarkable paper was communicated to *Macmillan's Magazine* in 1900 by the Admiral's daughter. Miss Senhouse believed it was written between 1827 and 1830, but as it was communicated to Sir Charles Ekins, and printed in part by him in 1824 (see *Naval Battles*, p. 271), it must have been originally written earlier, and possibly at Ekins' request. Miss Senhouse's manuscript, however, is a somewhat amplified form, more careful to repudiate

undisputed fact that the British Fleet bore up in succession and attacked in two lines ahead, and his argument is that it would have been better "if the regulated plan had been adhered to." "The attack of this almost infallible Admiral," he says, "was different from that laid down in his instructions, substituting a line-ahead for a line-abreast in his division"; and he holds that the change sacrificed both simultaneous impact and superior concentration of attack. He assumes the form of engaging in two lines ahead end-on as a fact that no one present at the action would dispute, and indeed no one did. "You are to understand," wrote Captain Harvey of the *Téméraire*, "that we bore down on the enemy in two columns," and every one who touched the point said the same thing.

Sir Charles Ekins, who had every opportunity of knowing, proceeds on the same assumption without a shadow of doubt. "It is known," he wrote, "to all the captains of the fleet that the plan of attack from to windward was, by previous concert, to have been of a different and still more formidable nature."¹ Indeed, it is believed that every categorical statement on the point by officers who

any suspicion of belittling of Nelson, and it may have been written later, possibly even when he was Hotham's flag-captain in the Mediterranean. It contains at least this curious addition: "There is a rising naval power which possesses the germs of a growing equality with the naval power of this country, and which may one day rise nearly to the colossal height its great prototype has obtained." This power he contrasts favourably with that of France and Spain, and regards with such serious apprehension as to deprecate the use of Nelson's tactics against it. He of course is referring to the rising power of Turkey and Egypt, which was broken by Codrington at Navarino in 1827. The manuscript, therefore, was probably produced before that time, but the menace continued to exist for some years after. It was, in any case, the result of mature reflection by an experienced staff officer. At the battle he was a lieutenant of only three years' standing, and knew nothing of Nelson's "Plan" or intentions. (See his letter of October 27th, 1805. *Ibid.*, p. 415.) He says there that the plan of attack had been so well arranged . . . that nothing was requisite but the signal to alter course, but he then believed the plan was for Collingwood to cut through the enemy's line or pass ahead or astern of it as convenient and engage them from to leeward, while Nelson doubled on the part engaged from to windward.

¹ *Naval Battles*, 268. Ekins wrote in 1824.

were present or directly concerned—that is, setting aside rough generalisations, and what is only inferential or an *obiter dictum*—asserts that the attack as delivered differed in important particulars from the plan of the Memorandum.

For those accustomed to weigh historical evidence there cannot be serious doubt of what the departure was, in the deliberate judgment of the Naval Staff of the time. On this we have evidence that no inferential argument can shake: for it lies in the next edition of the Signal Book. There, beyond all dispute, is a new Signal for a form of attack purporting, as the "Signification" explains, to embody the experiences of Trafalgar and the principles of the Memorandum. It is to "cut the enemy's line in order of sailing in two columns." It is accompanied by a diagram showing an almost vertical attack in two lines ahead without previous deployment, and a long instruction explaining the method of engaging in succession and its tactical advantages, such as they were, over simultaneous impact.¹

The best foreign criticism took precisely the same view. Here, for instance, is the appreciation sent to the Spanish Government some six weeks after the action by Escaño, Gravina's accomplished Chief of the Staff. "Nothing," he concludes, "is more seamanlike, or better tactics, than for a fleet which is well to windward of another to bear down upon it in two separate columns, and deploy into line at gunshot from the enemy. But Admiral Nelson did not deploy his columns at gunshot from our line, but ran up within pistol-shot and broke through it. . . . It was a manner in which I do not think he will find many imitators."²

How, then, in the face of these uncompromising and authoritative statements, can we reconcile the view—and it undoubtedly prevailed—that the plan of the Memorandum was carried out? The explanation is not far to seek.

¹ *Signals and Instructions for the use of H.M. Fleet*, 1816. Signal I. 7, p. 28. *Post*, Appendix C, p. 493.

² Fernandez Duro: *Armada Española*. viii. 353.

On analysis the famous document, like others of its class, will be found to be composed of two groups of ideas—the first relating to major tactics, and the second to minor. The origin of the first group may be traced back to a conversation which Nelson had with his faithful counsellor Keats at Merton, while he was waiting for his call. “No day,” said Nelson, “can be long enough to arrange a couple of fleets and fight a decisive battle according to the old system. . . . I shall form the fleet into three divisions in three lines. One division shall be composed of twelve or fourteen of the fastest two-decked ships, which I shall keep always to windward, or in a situation of advantage. . . . I consider it will always be in my power to throw it into the battle in any part I may choose. . . . With the remaining part of the fleet formed in two lines I shall go at them at once, if I can, about one-third of their line from their leading ship. . . . I think it will surprise and confound the enemy. They won’t know what I am about. It will bring on a pell-mell battle, and that is what I want.” Setting aside the third division—a point to be dealt with later—this scheme coincides with the action much more closely than it does with the Memorandum. Indeed, the expressions “go at them at once,” and “pell-mell battle,” suggest that Keats’s memory, by a familiar psychological process, was coloured by what actually occurred. Still here we have three of the four major ideas—attack in separate divisions instead of one line—concentration on the rear—and concealing the nature and point of the attack till the last moment. The Memorandum itself is much more subtle. It contained a fourth idea that was entirely Nelson’s own. Calder’s main conception had also been concentration on the rear, and he too had not formed his battle order or disclosed his attack till he was very close. But Calder’s attack had been parried by the enemy’s van coming down to the assistance of the rear.

It is in the craft with which the Memorandum provides against such a move that lies its most brilliant and original feature. Nothing else is entirely Nelson's. Duncan at Camperdown had attacked in two divisions; Clerk of Eldin had suggested the principle of approach in echelon on which Nelson's intended formation was based, while from Calder's action he got the warning of what he had to expect from the enemy.

Nelson's Memorandum opens with a recital of the delay inseparable from forming a large fleet in one line, and his consequent determination to organise his fleet in such a way that the order of sailing will be the order of battle, but with this proviso. The order of sailing was to be the order of battle, "with the exception of the first and second in command." This neglected point is important. It meant that in order of sailing the two admirals would as usual lead their respective divisions, but in order of battle they would not. Some other station would be assigned to them. Assuming a fleet of forty sail, the organisation would be in two lines of sixteen ships, with an advance squadron of eight (or one-fifth) composed of the fastest two-deckers—but as this last factor eventually disappeared it can be discarded for the present.

The next point is new—the second in command is to have entire direction of his line after the Admiral's intentions are made known to him. The wording of the paragraph does not make it quite clear at what time this independent direction was to begin. What did Nelson mean by "after the Admiral's intentions are made known to him"? A later paragraph defines it, at least for the attack from to windward, which was the attack actually delivered. In this case Nelson himself will conduct the approach until the whole fleet is "nearly within gunshot of the enemy's centre." He will then signal to Collingwood the manner in which he is to attack. The signal that will probably be

made is specified, and he is also warned what he may be wanted to do in case certain counter-movements are made by the enemy. Then Nelson repeats that the entire management of the lee line will be left to the second in command "after the intention of the Commander-in-chief is signified." This could only mean that the independent direction was to begin directly Nelson had given his colleague the signal to engage, and not before. In other words, his obvious and natural intention was to conduct the approach himself and then to leave his colleague a free hand to do his special part of the work.¹

Having got thus far with his major tactics he breaks off into the minor, dealing successively with the two conditions of finding the enemy to windward or to leeward. In engaging from to leeward—he will attack in three lines, in line-ahead. Collingwood will lead through as near as he can at the twelfth ship from the rear, so as to concentrate on about three-fourths of his own number.² Nelson's line will lead through about the centre; and the advance squadron, a few ships ahead of it, "so as to ensure getting at their Commander-in-chief, whom every effort must be made to capture." This idea of enveloping the enemy's Commander-in-chief was a return to the central idea of mediæval tactics. Indeed, nothing is so remarkable in this immortal Memorandum than the way in which it seems to gather up and co-ordinate every tactical principle that had ever proved effective.

He then falls back again into major exposition. The principle of the attack is concentration of the entire fleet upon the enemy's rear as far forward as their Commander-

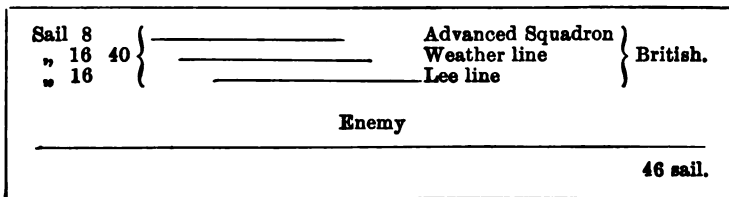
¹ This was certainly the view taken by the author of the Signal Book of 1816. The instruction in the "Trafalgar Signal" reads: "It is to be considered that the conduct of the Lee Division, after breaking the line, is left to its commander," i.e. in the absence of special instructions. See *post*, *Appendix C*.

² In a marginal note he explains that if the enemy are less than forty, only a proportionate number of the rear are to be cut off. "British to be $\frac{1}{2}$ superior to the enemy cut off."

in-chief and the units immediately ahead of him. This would leave some twenty sail untouched and free to act as Gravina had done in Calder's action, but he considers his form of attack provides sufficiently against any section of his fleet being doubled on by the unengaged ships of the enemy. "It must be some time," he says, "before they could perform a manœuvre to bring their force compact to attack any part of the British fleet engaged or to succour their own ships, which indeed would be impossible without mixing with the ships engaged." His meaning clearly is, that if the worst comes to the worst, there will be a *mêlée*, which must result in a decisive action. "I look with confidence," he adds, "to a victory before the van of the enemy can succour their rear, and then the British fleet would most of them be ready to receive their twenty-sail." He concludes this part of the Memorandum by a return to minor tactics, in which he explains exactly what is to be done if the van does tack, but as the attack was not made from to leeward these details may be discarded.

From this point onwards the document is concerned entirely with the minor tactics of an attack from to windward—the form which he hoped to and did adopt. The section is headed, "Of the intended attack from to windward. The enemy in line of battle ready to receive an attack." In this case "the divisions of the British fleet will be brought nearly within gunshot of the enemy's centre," and a diagram is given to illustrate the intended position.¹ The

¹ For the original as drawn by Nelson, see *post*, *Appendix D*, p. 498. The diagrams differ slightly in the various copies. In one in the British Museum, for instance, it stands thus:—



signal would then most probably be made for the lee line to bear up together upon the twelve rearmost ships of the enemy—that is, as before, upon three-fourths of its own number.¹

From the position in which Nelson intended to place him, the second in command would be able to deliver Howe's attack through the intervals of the enemy's line, going down with every stitch of canvas set in the regular line of bearing, obliquely, as Byng tried to do at Minorca, with his broadsides bearing.² "Some ships," wrote Nelson, "may not get through their exact place, but they will always be at hand to assist their friends, and if any are thrown round the rear of the enemy, they will effectually complete the business of twelve sail of the enemy."

Such an attack made from to windward was open to two well-known parries, with which Nelson proceeds to deal. The enemy might wear together so as to make the rear their van, or they might execute the manœuvre of the old French text-books, by bearing up together and running to leeward, so as to get the attacking force between two fires and avoid being raked. In either case Collingwood was to persist in his attack on the twelve ships assigned to him and press it home, "unless otherwise directed by the Commander-in-chief, which is scarcely to be expected." The remainder of the enemy's fleet was to be left to Nelson, but of what he intended to do he says no more than "that he will endeavour to take care that the movements of the second-in-command are interrupted as little as possible." In short, his major function was to contain the van, and the minor tactics would depend on circumstances.

¹ The signal provided was a "Single Flag," not in the printed book. He chose the eighth flag, on p. 17, "Yellow with blue fly," which had not been appropriated as a tactical signal, and gave it this signification in MS. :—"Cut through the enemy's line, and engage close on the other side. *N.B.*—This signal to be repeated by all ships." It stands thus in Hardy's copy of the Signal Book now in the possession of Commander Sir Malcolm Macgregor, R.N. The signal was not made at the action.

² For the technical meaning of the line of bearing, see *post*, p. 410.

From the approach which he contemplated it would be open to him either to cut the line at one point in line-ahead, or, like Collingwood, to cut it at all intervals; while the Advance Squadron, to which in the weather attack no special function was assigned, would be always in reserve to support either Admiral as circumstances required. But there are clear indications that he relied mainly on the former manœuvre, risky as it was. The danger which had caused it to fall into disuse since the old Dutch Wars was, firstly, that the leading ship was likely to be overpowered by a concentrated fire as she approached; and the second was, that if any ships did succeed in getting through they were liable to be cut off and surrounded. Nelson, we are often told, never measured risks. Nothing is really further from his character than such folly. In this case he faced the risks, measured them with consummate tactical insight, and provided a means of discounting them that was without precedent. His highly original and scientific idea was a combination of two principles—high speed, and massing guns to the utmost at the point of shock. For the first time on record the attack was to be made not under “fighting sails” as usual, but under every stitch the spars would carry. He would gather the highest attainable speed and so bring his momentum to the maximum, and the danger period to the minimum.

The second expedient was still more remarkable. It was obtained, as will be shown directly, by massing his three-deckers in the van of his line. This was a method of concentration which had been suggested originally by Bigot de Morogues in his *Tactique Navale* in 1763, as the only one that was really effective. Rodney had introduced a signal for it, but it had never been used till Nelson now set his seal upon it, to overcome the almost insuperable difficulties of the manœuvre for which his tactical scheme called most loudly. There was no case in which a well-formed line of

battle had been broken successfully by the old method in line-ahead, but Nelson must have thought that in the French theory he saw his way where no one before him had dared to tread. He would arm the head of his line for the fatal shock with a mass of fire that nothing could resist, and would overpower the time-honoured defensive formation by sheer weight of metal and momentum. He would form his van of a group so powerful that even if it were cut off and surrounded it could hold its own against any concentration that could be brought to bear upon it. Thus it was that at the supreme crisis he called to his aid the theory of the great French tactician—the theory of concentration of gun power in the fewest possible units and in the shortest possible length of line. And so in the culminating hour of sailing warfare the theorist and the man of action were at one.

Morogues' solution of the problem of concentration may have been in Nelson's mind for some time. We have seen how the idea of massing heavy ships in the van is to be detected in the two orders of battle which he had issued during his chase of Villeneuve.¹ In both cases, however, the arrangement may have been accidental or due to other considerations. Be that as it may, the Trafalgar order places it beyond doubt that Morogues' suggestion was the fundamental idea on which he disposed his ships. By a curious chance no copy of the order actually used in the action has come down to us. Indeed, it is most probable he never prepared one for the reduced fleet with which he eventually had to engage, since he did not anticipate fighting without Louis's division. The latest and only one he is known to have drawn up was issued with the Memorandum on October 10th. Calder was still with him at the time, and it includes his ship as well as those of Louis's division and one or two that were daily expected, leaving blanks for the rest. The original

¹ At Sardinia and Barbadoes; *ante*, p. 179.

signed and dated copy, issued "Off Cadiz, Oct. 10, 1805," is in the museum of the United Service Institution, with the fleet pennant-board attached. It is on a form designed for the forty sail that had been promised him, as given below, the ships not present at the battle being printed in italics with the causes of their absence appended in brackets.

ORDER OF SAILING.

VAN SQUADRON.		REAR SQUADRON.	
Van or Starboard Division.	Vanes at the main. First Division.	Vanes at the fore. First Division.	
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Téméraire</i> 98. 2. <i>Superb</i> 74 (<i>not arrived</i>). 3. <i>Victory</i> (flag) 100. 4. <i>Neptune</i> 98. 5. — 6. <i>Tigre</i> 74 (<i>with Louis</i>). 7. <i>Cinopus</i> 80 (<i>Louis's flag</i>). 8. <i>Conqueror</i> 74. 9. <i>Agamemnon</i> 64. 10. <i>Leviathan</i> 74. 		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Prince</i> 98. 2. <i>Mars</i> 74. 3. <i>R. Sovereign</i> (flag) 100. 4. <i>Tonnant</i> 80. 5. — 6. <i>Bellerophon</i> 74. 7. <i>Colossus</i> 74. 8. <i>Achille</i> 74. 9. <i>Polyphemus</i> 64. 10. <i>Revenge</i> 74.
Van or Starboard Division.	Second Division.	Rear or Larboard Division. Second Division.	
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. <i>Pr. of Wales</i> (flag) 98 (<i>home with Calder</i>). 12. <i>Ajax</i> 74. 13. <i>Orion</i> 74. 14. <i>Minotaur</i> 74. 15. — 16. <i>Queen</i> (<i>with Louis</i>) 98. 17. <i>Donegal</i> (<i>at Gibraltar</i>) 74. 18. <i>Spencer</i> (<i>with Louis</i>) 74. 19. — 20. <i>Spartiate</i> 74. 		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. <i>Britannia</i> (flag) 100. 12. <i>Swiftsure</i> 74. 13. <i>Defence</i> 74. 14. — 15. <i>Kent</i> 74 (<i>not arrived</i>). 16. <i>Zealous</i> 74 (<i>with Louis</i>). 17. — 18. <i>Thunderer</i> 74. 19. <i>Defiance</i> 74. 20. <i>Dreadnought</i> 98.

Apart from the striking concentration of powerful units in the van of each line the document presents other remarkable features. It will be observed that the organisation is quadruple in two squadrons and four divisions, each with its flag-officer. This was an innovation, but whether Nelson's or not cannot yet be said with certainty. The normal organisation since the reforms of Howe and Kempenfelt had been threefold, that is, in three squadrons, and for a fleet of this size each squadron would be in two divisions. It had become usual also to provide for a dual formation in two "Grand Divisions" by splitting the centre

squadron, and attaching its two divisions to the van and rear squadrons respectively. It will further be noted that no provision is made for the Advance Squadron which the Memorandum contemplated, as had been done in earlier Mediterranean orders.¹

It is incredible that if Nelson issued an order of battle, subsequent to this, no copy of it should have survived. We may assume, therefore, with some certainty that the order used in the action was that issued with the Memorandum, modified only by the exigencies of the case. Judging by the various extant lists purporting to show how the ships went into action the actual battle order must have been formed by simply closing up the intervals left by missing units, but with one important alteration. *Britannia* was certainly in Nelson's squadron, and in her own list and two others she is shown sixth. We may assume then, as was only natural, that when Calder went home, Lord Northesk was brought over to take his place at the head of Nelson's second division. His place would naturally have been taken by Louis, who was now the fourth flag-officer, but as he was away, the head of Collingwood's second division seems to have been assigned temporarily to the *Dreadnought*, from which ship Collingwood had just shifted his flag to the *Royal Sovereign*.²

On these indications we get the actual battle order of the reduced fleet as follows:—

¹ *Signals and Instructions* (N.R.S.), p. 73. An "Order of Battle and Sailing" similar to, but not identical with, the above was printed by Nicolas, (vii. 94). It is not signed or dated though assigned to October 9th, and may be a discarded draft of earlier date. It shows only a van and a rear squadron with no divisional organisation. The fifth station in each squadron is filled up and not left blank as in the Northesk copy. The *Kent* is not mentioned, her place being filled by *Orion* (Codrington), who was finally stationed next astern of *Ajax* in Nelson's squadron.

² The *Dreadnought* appears in this station in the Nicolas plan (vol. vii. 301). She certainly cannot have remained the rearmost ship, for she was one of the three three-deckers specially ordered to take station as her speed would allow. See *Ibid.*, p. 115, and *ante*, p. 372.

NELSON'S PLAN OF ATTACK

PROBABLE ORDER OF BATTLE AT TRAFALGAR.

As modified from that of October 10 for the ships actually present

<i>Van or Weather Squadron.</i>		<i>Rear or Lee Squadron.</i>	
1st Division.	1. Téméraire 98 (Harvey).	1st Division.	1. Prince 98 (Grindall).
	2. Victory 100 (Hardy).		2. Mars 74 (Duff).
	3. Neptune 98 (Fremantle).		3. R. Sovereign 100 (Rotherham).
	4. Conqueror 74 (I. Pellew).		4. Tonnant 80 (Tyler).
	5. Leviathan 74 (Bayntun).		5. Belleisle 74 (Hargood).
	6. Africa (?) 64 (Digby).		6. Bellerophon 74 (Cooke).
2nd Division.	7. Britannia 100 (Bullen).		7. Colossus 74 (Morris).
	8. Ajax 74 (Brown).		8. Achille 74 (King).
	9. Orion 74 (Codrington)	2nd Division.	9. Dreadnought 98 (Conn).
	10. Agamemnon 64 (Berry).		10. Polyphemus 64 (Redmill).
	11. Minotaur 74 (Mansfield).		11. Revenge 74 (Moorsom).
	12. Spartiate 74 (Laforey).		12. Swiftsure 74 (Rutherford).
			13. Defence 74 (Hope).
			14. Thunderer 74 (Lechemere).
			15. Defiance 74 (Durham).

This order, it is true, does not coincide exactly with any of the extant lists of how the ships came into action. But no two of them agree, none have any certain authority, and all are demonstrably incorrect in detail.¹ But taken with the official order of October 10th, it affords the best indication of the organisation that was in Nelson's mind. In that order we have a concentration in the van of the weather line of three three-deckers broken only by the *Superb*, a powerful seventy-four under his special favourite Keats, whom he had promised to be his second if he arrived in time.² Possibly a fourth three-decker was intended, as he was expecting two more, and the fifth place was left vacant. Similarly in Collingwood's line we have in the leading four units, two three-deckers, an eighty, and another powerful seventy-four, with the fifth place again left vacant. It was given to *Belleisle*, an exceptionally heavy two-decker, when she arrived.³

¹ See *post*, *Appendix E*, p. 500.

² Nelson to Ball, Oct. 15th: Nicolas, vii. 123.

³ She was taken in 1795, and when first placed on the Navy List was rated as an 80-gun ship. Her armament was 30 32-pounders; 30 24-pounders; 18 9-pounders; 14 32-pounder carronades, and 4 24-pounders. Her complement was 700 men, only 50 less than the 98's.

A further important feature to note in the arrangement of the two vans is that neither Nelson nor Collingwood was to lead his line in order of battle, but only in the normal order of sailing. In the Memorandum, Nelson wrote, "My line would lead through," not "I should lead through," and Captain Harvey says that in consequence of a signal made at the last moment he went into action astern instead of ahead of the *Victory*, implying that Nelson's station was second in order of battle, as we should expect in the absence of the *Superb*. As to Collingwood's place, we have a distinct statement that it was third, as in the official order of battle.¹

There is one more point in the order that was actually used, and which must be noticed as a departure from the Memorandum. The various lists agree that in the action the two squadrons were not equal. In all of them Nelson is shown with twelve units, and Collingwood with fifteen. The numerical inferiority of Nelson's column was no doubt partly due to the absence of Louis's squadron, since all but one of his ships belonged to the weather line in the official order. But the inferiority is more apparent than real, for if three-deckers are counted as two units, Nelson has sixteen against Collingwood's eighteen. For the purpose of containing by breaking the line in line-ahead Nelson's numerical inferiority was of small moment, while if Collingwood was to attack twelve of the enemy, it was essential to keep his division as nearly as possible one-fourth superior in number.

Such an allocation of force was all the more necessary owing to the absorption of the Advance Squadron into the two main divisions, and the consequent change from a triple to a dual organisation. This fundamental alteration has never been clearly explained, and is worth considera-

¹ Harvey to his Wife: *Great Sea Fights*, ii. 225, and Senhouse to his Mother: *Macmillan's Magazine*, vol. lxxxi. 417.

tion. By recent Mediterranean practice the Advance Squadron had been nothing but an Observation Squadron, but it is clear that Nelson had in his mind a step forward which would give it a real tactical function. In the Memorandum he treats it not merely as an Observation Squadron, but as a kind of reserve. On the assumption that his fleet would reach the promised number of forty sail of the line, he gives it in the Memorandum, though not in the Order of Sailing, an organisation in two grand divisions of sixteen ships each, with an Advance Squadron of eight of his fastest two-deckers, that is, one-fifth of his battle squadron and not the one-third which, as we have seen, he had been using on the eve of the engagement. Its purpose he explains by saying that, "It will always make, if wanted, a line of twenty-four sail on whichever line the Commander-in-chief may direct." Now, so far as we know, no such organisation was ever carried out, but owing to the circumstance that we have no "Organisation" of the fleet later than the 10th, it is almost impossible to say what was done.

An Observation Squadron had existed from the first. On taking over the command and before the Memorandum was issued, Nelson gave Duff four ships, namely, the *Mars* (his own), *Colossus*, *Defence*, and *Ajax*, two being from each squadron according to the original Order of Sailing. After the issue of the Memorandum, *Belleisle* and *Agamemnon* arrived and were added to the connecting line, being again one from each squadron. This detachment Nelson called his Advanced Squadron. "I have," he writes to Ball ten days before the battle, "an Advanced Squadron of fast-sailing ships between me and the frigates."¹ If Codrington is correct it must by this time have received its full organisation. Eight units, he says, were detached for this service after the Memorandum was issued, of which his own

¹ Nicolas, vii. 111, October 11th.

ship *Orion* was one. But he was obviously in some confusion as to what Nelson said he was going to do with them. He understood generally that the attack was to be made upon the enemy's rear in two lines, Collingwood making the main attack, while Nelson prevented the van from interfering, as it had done in Calder's action. He would effect this by cutting the line in rear of the allied Commander-in-chief, while the Advance Squadron cut it ahead of him so as to isolate and surround the enemy's flagship and her seconds. But Codrington was by no means clear, and naturally enough; for this form of engagement was enjoined by the Memorandum for the special case of an attack from to leeward only. In the other part of the document, which explains the intended attack from to windward, no independent attack is assigned to the Advance Squadron, though its existence is clearly shown in the diagram. We can only assume that in this case the general reserve clause relating to it would operate, and that it would be used to reinforce either line as necessary.

Brilliant as the Memorandum is as a tactical conception, a certain obscurity in its exposition must be admitted. It bears throughout marks of the haste with which it was drawn up when Nelson believed that the shift of wind into the east would bring Villeneuve out in a few hours. Its arrangement, as we have seen, is without logical order or system; it is full of repetitions; the diction in places ignores grammar; and the order of battle which it predicates differs radically from that which was issued. The meaning consequently is often far from clear without careful interpretative study, and the actual conditions on the eve of the battle can only have increased the captains' uncertainty.

As the situation stood, it was obvious the attack must be made from to windward. The diagram in the Memorandum clearly showed the existence and position of the Advance Squadron for such an attack, and yet the

Advance Squadron had been absorbed the night before and had ceased to exist as a separate organisation. Up till the last moment there was nothing to tell Nelson's captains that he had departed from the organisation he had laid down in the Memorandum. In the voluminous evidence that is extant there is no hint that he explained to the officers concerned that this tactical alteration had been made. If he had issued any fresh instructions, Codrington certainly could not have forgotten the circumstance or omitted to mention it. Long afterwards he dealt with the point, but the only impression left in his mind was that the arrangement had not been cancelled, and that Nelson had said that the eight ships were to draw out of the line if the enemy's van should threaten to come down to the assistance of the rear. But this is hardly possible. The Advance Squadron, as constituted on the night before the battle, consisted, as we have seen, of the five ships sent ahead, and four connecting with the cruisers. But of these no fewer than six belonged to the division which Collingwood led into battle, and they could not possibly have been called out of the line without paralysing the main attack.

Two conclusions, then, seem to be inevitable. The first is, that so long as Nelson had hope of recovering Louis's squadron, the idea of an Advance Squadron was still in his mind; but when that hope failed he abandoned the triple organisation altogether. The second is that no fresh tactical instructions were given to the fleet after his decision was made.

Such, as nearly as they can be ascertained, are the facts which are relevant to the problem of Nelson's real intentions. By the light of them we must seek to penetrate the meaning of his changing movements. They are all we have to reveal what was working in his mind, and by their aid alone can we reach any right appreciation of the tactics he actually employed.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE BATTLE OF TRAFALGAR

As the morning of October 21st broke in soft serenity Nelson, as we have seen, found himself with his fleet in disorder and a section of it absent, in presence of a superior enemy to leeward—not as he had pictured them “in the line of battle ready to receive an attack,” but apparently in no regular formation. The body of them bore from the flagship a little south of east, some nine miles away as estimated in the *Victory's* Log; and with Gravina's squadron to windward of the van they appeared to stretch north-north-east and south-south-west, with their heads to the southward as though making for the Straits.

The apparent lack of formation was due to the fact that Villeneuve was trying to change from the “order of battle as convenient” which he had hastily ordered at night-fall, to the regular order (*ordre naturel*). His organisation had been further disturbed by the discovery that the British fleet was stronger by five ships than he expected. Instead of being, as he had calculated, just equal to his *corps de bataille*, it outnumbered it, and thus at the last hour he found his whole tactical design was upset. To meet the case there was only one thing to do. The *corps de bataille* must be strengthened; his well-designed dual organisation must be sacrificed, and instead of having Gravina's advanced squadron as an independent unit, he was forced to order him to take station ahead of the *corps de bataille*. Thus after all his care and forethought, there

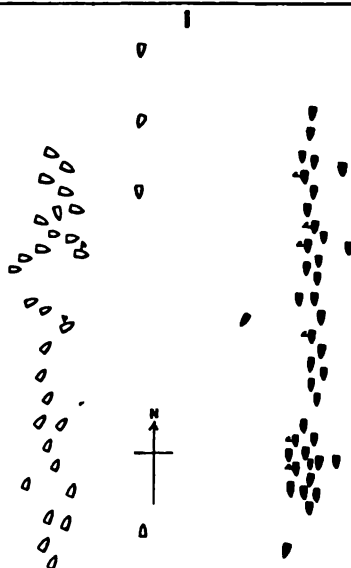
PLAN OF TRAFALGAR

attached to the Report
of

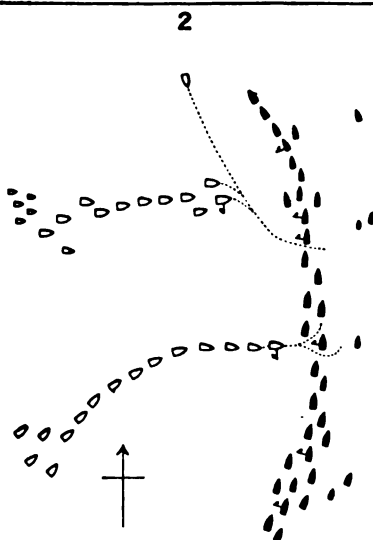
Captain Prigny,
Villeneuve's Chief of the Staff
(Archives de la Marine BB4 232)
from
Desbrière's Trafalgar.

Note.—This Plan was also adopted
by Dumanoir.

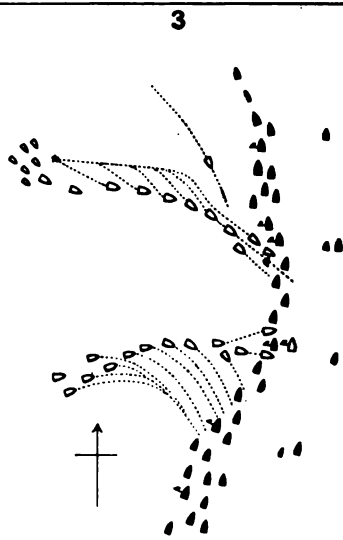
- ▷ French and Spanish Fleet.
- ◁ English Fleet.



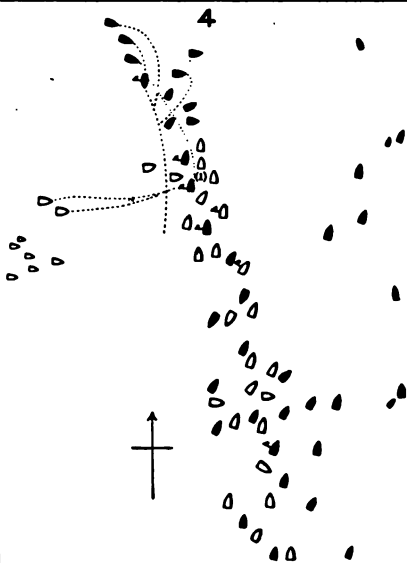
About 6:30 after Nelson's first
two signals. British lines beginning
to form.



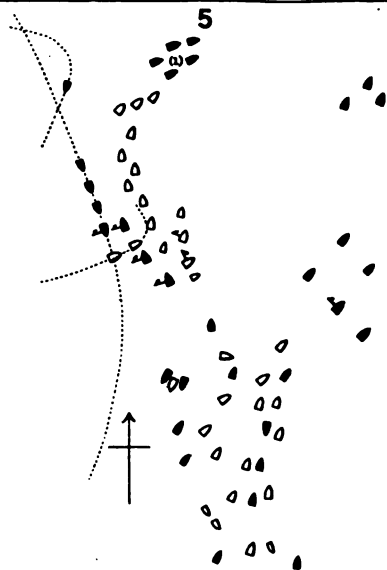
About 11:30. Nelson steering to
pass ahead of S. Trinidad and his
subsequent turn to starboard.



About 12:30. Shewing the ships
of Nelson's division edging into his
wake after his turn to starboard.



4
About 2:30. Action general and Dumanoir wearing. This note is attached: "(1) Course which the commander of the Van should have taken."



5
About 3:0. This note is attached: "(1) These ships did not run for Cadix. They came into action: for instance the Intrepide amongst others."



6
About 3:30. Dumanoir's attempt on the rear. The new British line is not shown.



7
About 4:0. Retreat of Gravina & Dumanoir. The Neptune isolated.

been contrary to the established practice. Fleets in those days rapidly lost order and cohesion if they tried to move any distance in line-abreast or line of bearing, and it had been one of the most useful reforms of Howe and Kempenfelt to abolish the clumsy method of the old order of sailing. On their improved system, adapted from the French, a fleet in sailing order always moved in two or more lines ahead, and nothing was held to have increased tactical mobility so much as this happy innovation.¹ No Admiral would have thought of reverting to the discredited system at such an hour, and least of all Nelson, whose plan depended on holding the fleet in his hand in the highest attainable state of flexibility and cohesion till the moment came to fling it upon the enemy in the manner that the moment should require.

What he did was to signal at once for the Order of Sailing, and a few minutes afterwards—that is, probably as soon as the first signal was answered—"to bear-up and sail large" with the compass signal east-north-east. Now this was a signal not intended for a formed fleet, that is, a fleet in sailing or battle order. It was used only to an unformed fleet, and the effect, therefore, of the two hoists was an order to bear-up one after the other in turn as they happened to be sailing and take their regular stations in the wake of their respective flagships as they steered east-north-east.² The plain evidence of the Signal Book is

¹ See "Instructions respecting the Order of Sailing": *Signal Book*, 1799, article ii. p. 127. "The columns are to be parallel to each other, every ship steering in the wake of the leading ship of her column." Cf. *Signals and Instructions* (*Navy Records Society*), pp. 75-77.

² No. 72. "Form the order of sailing in two columns." The corresponding instruction in the *Signal Book*, No. 4, p. 101. provides that "when a signal is made for any line or order of sailing" with a compass signal, that signal indicates "the direction in which the line is to be formed." If a compass signal is hoisted after the main signal has been answered "it is to show the course the fleet is to steer." In this case no compass signal was hoisted with the one for the order of sailing. What followed was a separate signal, No. 76—"When lying-to or sailing by the wind to bear-up and sail large on the course steered by the Admiral or that pointed out by signal." In this case

endorsed by the Master of the *Neptune*, who expressly records that they bore up in succession.¹ Moreover, under Nelson's own hand we have exactly what he intended. In the last entry in his Private Diary he wrote, "At daylight saw the enemy's Combined Fleet from east to east-south-east; bore away; made signal for order of sailing." There can therefore be no shadow of doubt that he regarded "bearing away" as a preliminary to forming the order of sailing, and that he meant the fleet to form upon him as he bore away east-north-east.²

east-north-east was "the course pointed out." It has been assumed sometimes that this meant "bear-up together," but the corresponding instruction (No 14, p. 132) begins, "When the fleet is to bear-up in succession and sail large," and it proceeds to say how each ship is to behave with regard to her seconds ahead and astern. It was a signal Nelson was in the habit of making to an unformed fleet, *e.g.*, "Proceedings of the Fleet, September 30th" (*Add. MSS.*, 34973): "At 1.0 hove-to; at 6.0 made general signal to make sail after lying-to (*i.e.* No. 76); at 6.35, to tack in succession; at 6.35 to bear-up and sail large (No. 76 again); at 6.42 general, to form the established order of sailing." The corresponding signals for a formed fleet "in line of battle or order of sailing" were Nos. 79 to 82. Nos. 79 and 80 to alter course in succession to port or starboard one point or as directed by compass signal; Nos. 81 and 82 to alter course together. There was no signal for an unformed fleet to bear-up together. Until it was in order of battle or sailing such an order could not be given to it, for the simple reason that it would have thrown the fleet out of cruising order, that is, the loose order that was specially maintained to facilitate a rapid formation of the order of sailing.

¹ *Masters' Logs*, P.R.O. This Log unfortunately was not printed either by Nicolas or in the *Great Sea Fights*. Otherwise so careful an historian as Admiral Colomb would never have hazarded his unlucky conjecture that the fleet bore up together (*The Battle of Trafalgar*, 1905, reprinted from the *United Service Magazine*). Senhouse also is perfectly clear on the point. "The British fleet," he says, "bore up in succession . . . and continued in the order of sailing of two divisions in line-ahead until the attack" (*Macmillan's Magazine*, vol. lxxxi. 422). The term "in succession" at that time was used not only for movements in line-ahead, but also for movements in cruising order—meaning that no ship was to tack or haul upon the new course till the ship ahead of her had done so. It was a device to prevent confusion and accident. For Nelson's use of the term, see *post*, p. 404-5.

² Nicolas, vii. 137. Collingwood in his Journal clearly states that this is what happened. "6.30, Order of Sailing in two columns. . . . Bore up . . . the British fleet in two columns bearing down on them" (*Great Sea Fights*, ii. 201). At first he bore up south 80 east presumably to open out the correct distance from the *Victory* (*Royal Sovereign*, Captain's Log). See also Captain Moorsom's and Captain Harvey's descriptions and the Logs *passim*, as summarised by Mr. Newbolt, *Year of Trafalgar*, pp. 83-4. "Column" in the *Signal Book* was a technical equivalent borrowed from the French for "line-ahead." "Line-ahead" does not occur at all in the signals relating to order of sailing.

Now this is precisely what the enemy saw. The first impression as the British fleet bore up in the distance was that it was forming line-abreast or line of bearing or groups disposed abreast.¹ As the movement went on, however, it was seen to be dividing into two groups or "pelotons," which would be the natural effect of the various ships cutting their corners to get into the Admirals' wake. Finally in about two hours it was evident that these two groups were developing into two columns with the heavy ships leading.²

Villeneuve's first idea was that Nelson was coming down upon his rear in a mass of groups with the double intention of securing a superior concentration and cutting him off from Cadiz.³ To meet such an attack there was a special signal in the French book. It ran, "The fleet of the Republic being in order of battle and in any line whatever to leeward, the enemy in group formation (*en peloton*) or in any line whatever or even in several lines, endeavouring to engage the rear of the fleet—order to all the vessels to wear together."⁴ Villeneuve's fleet being in the process of carrying out his last signal for *ordre naturel* was in no condition to manœuvre. It was indeed in so much disorder that in many places it was *en pelotons* instead of in line. Nevertheless he determined to make the signal, and thus for the second time tried to wear his unformed fleet together, regardless of the consequences.

¹ Some ships seem to have anticipated Nelson's general signal in order as was usual to get nearer their place. See Logs of *Conqueror* and *Ajax: Great Sea Fights*, ii. 257 and 285.

² See Desbrière, *Trafalgar*, pp. 184-5 and in his *Appendix*, Report of Villeneuve, p. 129; Dumanoir, p. 150; Magendie, p. 178; Lucas (*Redoutable*), p. 197; Philibert (Magon's chief-of-staff), p. 233; Epron (*Argonaute*), p. 249; L'Achille, p. 263. Two French vessels, *Neptune* (p. 192) and *Fougueux* (p. 214) report the enemy forming *en échiquier* (i.e. line of bearing) and then in column.

³ Desbrière, *Trafalgar*, p. 129.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 192, *Neptune's* report. See also p. 166, Report of the *Héros*, where the text has "enemi en pelotons."

Did Nelson expect this when he made his undisguised threat upon Villeneuve's rear? Blackwood, who had been called on board the *Victory* about this time, says "he appeared very much to regret it."¹ Yet the Memorandum anticipated such a movement. Should the enemy wear together, Nelson had written, the original rear was still to be Collingwood's "object of attack." It is clear, however, that he had not looked for the movement so soon. He was providing for its being made when the attack was fully developed. Still that Villeneuve wore sooner than he expected is hardly enough of itself to account for his annoyance. There is, moreover, a further difficulty about what was in Nelson's mind at this time. How could he possibly have attacked as he intended, on the course he was steering for the rear, if Villeneuve had held on to the southward? The only way, without interchanging the positions of the two squadrons, would have been to stand for the enemy's van as it then was, and then haul to the wind in succession on the opposite tack and so bring his fleet in echelon abreast their centre. But even this would have been very awkward, and in the light wind would have taken too much time. When Villeneuve reversed the order of his fleet the situation was much more favourable, since the position of the Memorandum could have been obtained, when Nelson thought fit, by simply throwing the two divisions into the larboard line of bearing. Why then did Nelson regret it? The answer is that he did not yet realise that Villeneuve was in order of battle. To him the allied fleet in the distance appeared to be like his own in cruising order—the *route libre* of the French. "At seven," he wrote in the last entry in his Private Diary, "the enemy wearing in succession. May the Great God whom I worship grant to my country and for the benefit of Europe in general a great and glorious Victory." He must have

¹ Clarke and M'Arthur, ii. 146, and Nicolas, vii. 138.

thought, like Cromwell, that the Lord had delivered them into his hand. As we know they were not "wearing in succession" but "together," and if Nelson had realised they were in order of battle he could not have mistaken the manœuvre. It must have seemed to him that they were performing another manœuvre—in fact the one he himself had just executed. In his eyes it was not a line of battle being inverted, but an unformed fleet in which the ships were wearing in turn one after the other in the now obsolete sense of "in succession."¹ It could only mean that he had caught them unawares, and that to save themselves from an attack in chase they were hurrying *en route libre* for Cadiz.

At that time, indeed, the British fleet had all the appearance of threatening the old vehement attack of Hawke and Boscawen—attack in general chase with the leading ships forming line as they chased. In some of the British ships the impression seems to have been that this was actually Nelson's intention. "The signal was made to chase," wrote a lieutenant of the *Royal Sovereign* in his Journal. "Bore up and made all sail in chase," says the Master of the *Conqueror*.² It is then quite possible and indeed the best explanation of all the circumstances that this idea was at first uppermost in Nelson's mind—to fling his fleet upon the unformed enemy at the earliest possible moment, or as Collingwood told Pasley, to deliver "an impetuous attack in two distinct bodies."³

Whether or not this was actually his first impulse, it is certain it did not last long. However much the inversion of the enemy's line annoyed him, it quickly became apparent

¹ Gravina's Staff report makes this quite clear: "A las 8," it says, "la señal de virar en redondo a un tempo (to wear together) arrivando sucesivamente (bearing up in succession) para quedar alineados en la mura de babor (in order to get into line on the port tack)."

² It is a curious fact that of the seventeen ships which record the preliminary signals only seven mention that for the order of sailing.

³ To Pasley, December 16th: Nicolas, vii. 241.

he was adhering to the principle of his plan of attack. So soon as he realised their intention to head to the northward he again made the signal to bear up, this time with the compass flag "East." He did not, however, steer that course, but as the Logs of the leading ships show, from half a point to a point north of east, direct for the enemy's centre. It was just what the Memorandum provided, and would bring the whole weight of his attack upon their new rear.¹

But before proceeding further, it is necessary to clear the expressions "centre" and "rear" from the ambiguity which has been so fertile in error. Owing to the change in the allied formation much confusion arose both in their own and the British reports in specifying the various parts of the fleet. When Villeneuve decided to invert the line, he ordered Gravina to form the squadron of observation in the rear of the *corps de bataille*. This, the main body of the fleet which was Villeneuve's immediate command, consisted of three squadrons, which were designated "Van," "Centre," and "Rear." The new disposition, however, upset the old designations. Some officers in their reports kept to the original nomenclature, and used "Rear" as meaning the rear of the *corps de bataille*; while others gave it up and used "Rear" to designate Gravina's observation squadron, which was now the true rear of the fleet. So also with the "Centre." In some reports it means the old "Centre"; that is, the centre of the *corps de bataille*. In others it means the centre of the complete line; that is, the new "Centre" comprising the original "Rear" and part of the

¹ *Victory* records the change of course thus: "At 7.0 course east-north-east. At 8.0 (till noon), east by north." *Neptune* has: "At 7.0, north-east by east. At 8.0 (till noon), east half-north." Collingwood's Journal has the signal: "At 7.40 to bear up east." *Royal Sovereign's* Log gives her course generally as "south 80 east." *Tonnant* (her second) "east by south." *Conqueror* (astern of *Neptune*) has "east half-south." Confusion has arisen as to the actual course of the approach, since some vessels record only the first compass signal and some only the second. *Ajax* is the only ship that records both correctly.—See *post*, *Appendix F*, "Abstract of Signals," pp. 507-8.

original "Centre," while the rest of the original "Centre" became part of the actual van. As a consequence of this ambiguity it happens that in some reports both Nelson and Collingwood are said to attack the centre, while in others Nelson is said to attack the van and Collingwood the rear. To clear up the confusion the French Staff prepared for Napoleon the following lucid table, which it is well to grasp at the outset:¹—

LINE OF BATTLE.			LINE OF BATTLE.			
As issued to all the ships of the fleet on Oct. 6.			With the changes indicated in M. Prigny's report and in the Journals.			
Inverted Order.						
Third Squadron.	Neptuno	84	9 vessels for some time out of action.	Neptuno.	To leeward of line.	
	Scipion	74		Scipion.		
	Rayo	74		Intrépide.		
	Formidable (flag)	80		Rayo.		
	Duguay Trouin	74		Formidable.		
	San Francisco de Assisi	74		Duguay Trouin.		
First Squadron.	Mont Blanc	74	Mont Blanc.	To leeward of line.		
	San Augustin	74	San Francisco.			
	Héros	74	San Augustin.			
	Sma. Trinidad (flag)	130	Héros.			
	Bucentaure (flag)	80	Sma. Trinidad.			
	Neptune	80	Bucentaure.			
Second Squadron.	Leandro	64	8 vessels attacked by 1st Column.	Neptune.	To leeward of line.	
	Redoutable	74		Rédoutable.		
	Intrépide	74		Leandro.		
	San Justo	74		San Justo.		
	Indomptable	80		Indomptable.		
	Santa Anna (flag)	120				
Squadron of Observation.	Fougueux	74	16 vessels attacked by 2nd Column.	Santa Anna.	To leeward of line.	
	Monarca	74		Fougueux.		
	Pluton	74		Monarca.		
	Bahama	74		Pluton.		
	Aigle	74		Algeçiras.		
	Montañes	74		Bahama.		
Second Squadron.	Algeçiras (flag)	74		Aigle.		
	Argonauta	84		Swiftsure.		
	Swiftsure	74		Argonauta.		
	Argonaute	74		Montañes.		
	San Ildefonso	74		Argonauta.		
	Achille	74		Berwick.		
First Squadron.	Pr. de Asturias (flag)	112		Nepomuceno.		To leeward of line.
	Berwick (flag)	74		Achille.		
	Nepomuceno	74		San Ildefonso.		
		74		Principe de Asturias.		

Note.—"The positions in the Squadron of Observation are uncertain."

¹ Desbrière, *Trafalgar, App.*, p. 124.

It must be taken, then, for all tactical purposes that as soon as it was seen that Villeneuve was inverting his order, both the British columns steered for the centre, or if we regard the Combined Fleet as having fallen into two grand divisions, as in effect it actually did, then Nelson steered for the rear of the van and Collingwood for the van of the rear.

By Nelson's signals, as we have seen, the approach was being made on the true centre in sailing order, that is in two columns line-ahead, but it was almost immediately modified in a remarkable manner by the independent action of Collingwood. By the text of the Memorandum, it will be remembered, the Second-in-command was to have entire control of his division "after the intention of the Commander-in-chief had been signified," but no such intimation was to be expected till Nelson had brought both divisions "nearly within gunshot of the enemy's centre." They were nowhere near such a position, yet as Collingwood read the Memorandum he must have thought that the time for the free hand which Nelson had promised him had already come, and within half-an-hour of Villeneuve's making the signal to invert the order of battle, Collingwood signalled the lee division "to form the larboard line of bearing," thereby actually overriding Nelson's signal for the Order of Sailing.¹

¹ This, the most important tactical order in the battle, has always been placed about 11 o'clock, owing to the careless way the Log of the *Royal Sovereign* was kept. *Thunderer* also has it entered, so that it appears in the afternoon. But there are two signal Logs—*Téméraire* and *Defence*—which fix it exactly, though by a miracle they seem to have escaped the notice of the numerous writers who have dealt with the battle. *Téméraire* (Master's Log) has "8.47, *Royal Sovereign* to Larboard Division Nos. 42 and 88." *Defence* (both Captain's and Master's Logs) has "8.45 Sig. 50 divisional from *Royal Sovereign*; 8.46, ditto 42 and 88." No. 50 is "to keep larboard line of bearing though on starboard tack." *Agamemnon*, in Nelson's division, answered it, thinking it was general. It was probably a mistake of the signal officer, and was at once annulled by No. 42: "Form the larboard line of bearing, steering the course indicated." No. 88 was: "Make more sail, the leading ship first if in line of battle or order of sailing."

This startling fact has escaped notice apparently because it has always been assumed that Collingwood made his signal at the last hour. It has further been taken, as a

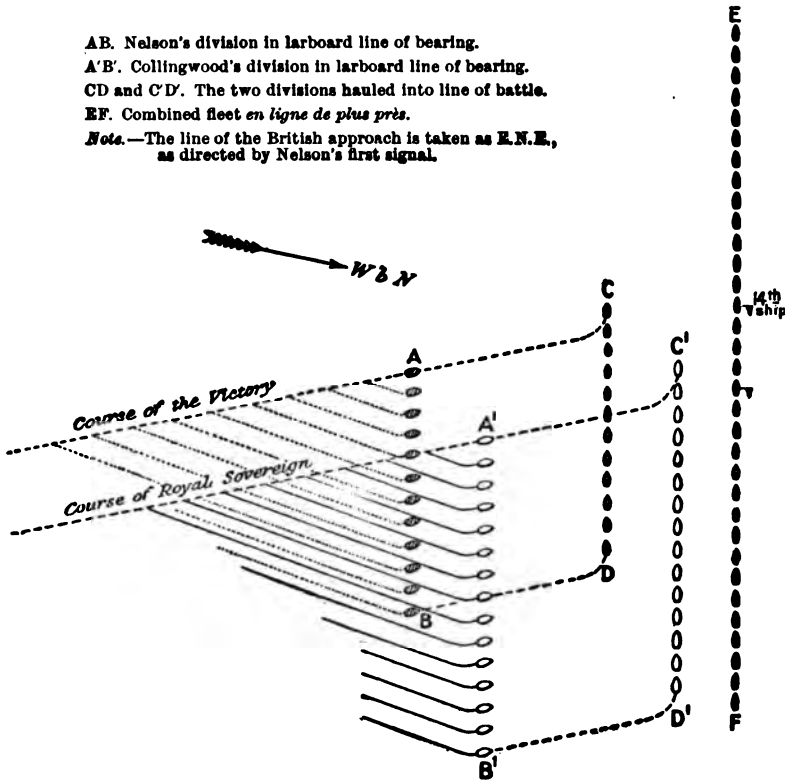


DIAGRAM TO ILLUSTRATE THE INTENTION OF COLLINGWOOD'S
 SIGNAL FOR THE LARBOARD LINE OF BEARING

matter of course, that he made it in consequence of the fact that a concavity which developed in the allied line had brought Gravina's division almost parallel with Collingwood's approach. But if this were so the larboard line of

bearing is not the formation he would have required. The truth is, it had nothing to do with the concavity. Collingwood gave the order nearly two hours before Villeneuve made the signal which, as we shall see, produced the malformation.

Why, then, did Collingwood make the signal? Its tactical purpose, as laid down in the *Signal Book*, leaves little room for doubt. A note to the signification explains it somewhat obscurely as meaning that the ships were "to bear from each other on the point of the compass on which they would sail, keeping a point from the wind, if formed in a line-ahead on the larboard tack." This survival of Howe's crabbed style is unintelligible until we know that by "keeping one point from the wind" was meant one point from the true close-hauled line, that is, seven points from the wind instead of six, which was the true close-hauled line or *ligne de plus près* of the French. The phrase therefore merely embodies the British practice of keeping a point in hand for contingencies.¹ The instruction then may be translated thus: "The line of bearing is to be formed in such a way that when the ships haul together into line of battle their line will be seven points from the wind or one from the true close-hauled line." In short, it was the ordinary evolution to bring a column from the approach into a line of battle parallel to and on the same tack with the *ligne de plus près* which the French were trying to form.² The explanation of Collingwood's conduct is that he believed he was

¹ See *Signals and Instructions* (*Navy Records Society*), p. 77, and *Signal Book*, 1799, Instruction xv. p. 120.

² The instruction attached to the signal (*Signal Book*, 1799, p. 149, Instruction vii.) provides that "the ships are to place themselves in such a manner that if they haul to the wind together on the tack for which the line of bearing is formed, they would immediately form line on that tack. To do this every ship must bring the ship which would be her second ahead, if the line of battle were formed, to bear on that point of the compass on which the fleet would sail, viz on that point of the compass which is seven points from the direction of the wind, or six points, if the signal is made to keep close to the wind.

doing what Nelson would naturally expect him to do, in order to get the fleet into the position of the diagram, and that as soon as his own manœuvre was fairly advanced, Nelson would commence it in his turn. It was in fact the obvious evolution to bring the two divisions into echelon nearly abreast the enemy's centre, as the Memorandum distinctly laid down for the windward attack.

Nelson, however, had a subtler idea, and made no corresponding move. Still, although, as we shall see, he did not yet consider Collingwood in full control of his division, he must have seen no harm in what his second was doing. At any rate he raised no objection, and permitted the evolution to continue as best it could. But it is to be observed that by his conduct he made it practically impossible for it to be carried out. It is obvious that when a fleet is going large in line-ahead, the close-hauled line of bearing cannot be formed unless the leading ships shorten sail. Nelson did not shorten sail and Collingwood, who was to commence the attack, had to conform and keep his speed. But, although *the* line of bearing was thus put beyond his reach, *a* line of bearing was still possible. Collingwood's division had not had time to get into line-ahead astern of him, and most of the rear ships were to starboard of his wake and already partly in position for a bow-and-quarter line. After about half-an-hour Collingwood seems to have recognised the situation. His chief continued to hold on without any sign of deploying or shortening sail, and either because Nelson did not conform or because he saw the line of bearing parallel to the enemy was impossible, he abandoned it for a bow-and-quarter line such as he could hope to achieve.

Accordingly he signalled to *Belleisle*, whom he had just ordered to take station astern of him, since his true second *Tonnant* could not keep up, to take station to the southwest of him, as though he intended to substitute a south-

west bow-and-quarter line for the larboard line of bearing. Five minutes later he signalled to the *Revenge*, the fastest ship about his centre, to keep a line of bearing from him; but the point on which she was to bear is not stated. We might assume it was south-west also, were it not that immediately afterwards he made a signal to the *Belleisle* and also to the *Achille*, a ship midway between her and the *Revenge*, to alter course one point to starboard together. The signification of the signal was, "Alter course *together* one point to starboard or to the course pointed out by compass signal, the ships preserving their relative bearing from each other;" and the instruction attached provides that "when a line of bearing has been formed the ships are to preserve that relative bearing from each other whenever they are directed to alter course together."¹ Now, no compass signal was made, nor was it possible the line of bearing had been formed in the seven minutes that had elapsed since the previous signal. On the evidence of the signals, therefore, the only conclusion is that Collingwood had seen that even a south-west line of bearing was impossible without his shortening sail, that he had consequently overridden his south-west signal by that for one point to starboard, and had found himself forced to be content with a line of bearing only one point from the line-ahead.

This conclusion has all the more weight since it is the only way of reconciling his various signals for line of bearing with the fact that he himself, in his official despatch and in his tactical explanation to his friend Pasley, says he attacked in column. Of a line of bearing he says not a word in either place. An irregular ill-formed bow-and-quarter line one point from the line-ahead was of course in the circumstances tactically indistinguishable from a column, and this is why Collingwood's own official statement that the fleet attacked in two columns is en-

¹ Signal 81, and Instruction viii. p. 150.

dorsed by Harvey and Senhouse, as well as by Moorsom himself, who was captain of the *Revenge*, and indeed by every eye-witness and contemporary writer who touched the question.

It is of course possible, by selecting fragmentary passages from the ill-kept Logs and Journals and by calculations based on the various times at which ships alleged they engaged, to infer that possibly a real line of bearing was formed; but the rigour of historical science absolutely forbids such fragile web-spinning to obscure a question which is illumined by direct and unimpeachable evidence to the contrary. Not only have we the categorical positive of the signals and of the very best authorities present, but there is the irrefutable negative that in all the mass of contemporary description there is absolute silence as to the lee line having approached in the manner suggested. For historical scholars such silence on a matter of the highest importance, even if it stood alone, would be conclusive. But it does not stand alone, and the weight of direct evidence behind it leaves no room for doubt that, however anxious Collingwood may have been to form a line of bearing, he found that, as Nelson held on as he was, it was perhaps contrary to his wish and certainly impossible to achieve.

What Nelson thought of it all is difficult to fathom. His mind at this time is impenetrable. He was still steering for just ahead of the centre under a press of sail with his division forming in his wake as best it could, as though he was still bent on delivering Hawke's attack in chase to prevent the enemy escaping.¹ "His great anxiety," wrote Moorsom, "seemed to be to get to leeward of them, lest they should make off into Cadiz before he could get

¹ *Victory's Log* says: "Still standing for the enemy's van," but as he is recorded to have headed for the 14th ship, and he never altered his course from E. by N., it is clear "van" here means "the van half of the fleet."

near." But as he advanced it became evident that Villeneuve did not mean to avoid him. To his surprise the Combined Fleet, after wearing, had boldly hove-to to form their line of battle and await his attack.¹ For such a condition of affairs Hawke's attack was singularly ill-adapted, unless he could get up before their battle order was complete. The bold attitude of the enemy certainly upset Nelson's calculations. "About ten o'clock," says Captain Blackwood, "Lord Nelson's anxiety to close with the enemy became very apparent." He must have been in a high state of nervous tension, for he kept saying to Blackwood that they put a good face on it, but always added quickly, "I'll give them such a dressing as they never had before." Still he made no sign of deploying in conformity with Collingwood's signal, but he did begin interfering with his colleague's line, as though he did not yet regard him as in charge of it, and a passage of some humour took place between the two old friends.

Both of them, in breach of the established order of

¹ In view of the attempts to show Nelson's approach could not have been vertical owing to the supposed movement of the enemy to the northward, the point that they were motionless is very important. The evidence is conclusive from both sides. From the Logs in the *Great Sea Fights* we have: "A.M. The enemy forming the line and waiting our attack" (*Britannia*, p. 211). "A.M. Enemy's fleet lying-to and forming the line" (*Spartiate*, p. 262, two entries). "At 12.10 the enemy's fleet then ahead, lying-to" (*Colossus*, p. 265). "At noon . . . the combined fleet lying-to" (*Entrepreneur*, p. 320). Walker of the *Bellerophon* says: "While we were bearing down on them they formed line and waited for us with great intrepidity" (*Ibid.*, p. 323). Senhouse says they were "lying with their main-top sails to the mast and consequently could not keep accurate station" (*Macmillan's Magazine*, vol. lxxxi. p. 421). From the French accounts it is clear the only motion was what was necessary for forming the line. "Les vaisseaux de l'arrière-garde ont été obligés de se tenir en panne pendant très longtemps" (Prigny's *Abstract*, Desbrière, p. 285). In the *Corps de Bataille* he says it was the same, "d'autres étaient en panne au moment où le combat a commencé" (*Ibid.*, p. 186, and see the Reports he quotes). The *Bucentaure* herself was hove-to (*Ibid.*, p. 187). We have also the fact that the *Victory* steered all through the approach for the 14th ship from the van and records no change in her course till the last moment. As other ships do record their changes of course from hour to hour, the presumption is that the *Victory* did not change.

battle, were still leading their divisions. Neither showed any inclination to get back into his proper station, and Nelson's officers, in extreme anxiety for his life, were worrying about it. Blackwood at last undertook to approach him, and after trying in vain to persuade him to direct the battle from the *Euryalus*, he begged him to let the three ships astern—*Téméraire*, *Neptune*, and *Leviathan*—go ahead of the *Victory*. With difficulty Blackwood got permission to carry the order to the *Téméraire* to pass if she could, and the necessary signals were made.¹ But if Nelson consented to get into his proper station, "Coll" must do the same. The *Prince*, which should have been leading the lee line, was falling far astern. There was no chance of her ever getting into her station, and Collingwood was seen coolly pushing on right ahead of his division, regardless of support. Such a challenge was more than Nelson's fighting instinct could endure. But even so he could not bring himself to use his authority by a direct order. So like any schoolboy he began to try to jockey him out of the lead. Collingwood had just made the signal for *Belleisle* to take *Tonnant's* place, but without regarding it Nelson signalled the *Mars*, which had been one of the connecting ships and was now coming up fast, to take station astern of the *Royal Sovereign*, with what intention soon appeared. Collingwood paid no regard. On the contrary it was now he made his final signal for a point to starboard together, and it is possible that Nelson's obvious anxiety to keep him back had not a little to do with his determination to abandon the attempt to form even a south-west line of bearing. Without his shortening sail it could not be done, and shorten sail he would not unless Nelson set him the example, or gave a direct order. Still Nelson would not do either, but a quarter of an hour

¹ Clarke and M'Arthur, ii. ch. xii. p. 148. Dr. Beatty says *Victory* signalled *Téméraire* and *Leviathan* to go ahead.—Nicolas, vii. 146. *Téméraire* (Master's Log) records at 9.36 a signal, No. 269, for *Leviathan* to take station astern of *Téméraire*. *Neptune* was evidently lagging.

later he tried again. This time he went a step further and actually signalled *Mars* to lead the lee division. In the absence of the *Prince* it was her proper station by the order of battle, and no hint could have been broader for Collingwood to fall back astern of her. But this attempt was even less effective than the last. Collingwood, it is clear, had no intention of getting back into his station short of a direct order, which he must have known his old friend would not have the heart to give. He at least had the justification that there was now no three-decker but his own to lead his line, and his defiant reply was to set all his studding-sails.¹ Then Nelson gave it up, and thenceforth there was little chance of *Téméraire* being allowed to obey his last order.

The story goes that at this time Nelson caught sight of some one resetting one of his studding-sails, and thinking it was being taken in without his orders, he delivered himself with a heat that seemed beyond the occasion. Away to leeward Collingwood, with his division in an irregular bow-and-quarter line disposed steeply on his starboard quarter, was still pressing on in his newly coppered ship and drawing gradually more and more ahead of his second astern. It was no wonder, then, that when Blackwood got back to the *Victory* he found Nelson in a peppery humour doing all he could to increase his speed and prevent *Téméraire* carrying out the order that had been wrung from him. But for his colleague's disobedience he had nothing but admiration. "See," he exclaimed half-an-hour later, "how that noble fellow Collingwood carries his ship into action!"

Meanwhile the situation had been crystallizing. It was now perfectly evident that, far from running away, the enemy were defiantly abiding his attack. Welcome as Villeneuve's attitude was, it had its drawbacks. It brought the shoals of Trafalgar under his lee, so that it would be

¹ *Log of Royal Sovereign*: "At 11.0, Set studding sails."

difficult to push home the attack, and it opened Cadiz as a point of retreat. On the other hand it greatly facilitated the plan of attack which Nelson had in mind. The need to hurry was obviously not so great as he had supposed, and it might have been thought that now if ever he would attempt to deploy and bring about the situation which the diagram in the Memorandum had prescribed. There was, however, a difficulty about it which did not exist in Collingwood's case. Most of Nelson's division were coming into line from his larboard quarter,¹ so that they were very badly placed for forming a line of bearing such as Collingwood had been attempting. It would take much longer, and moreover, Nelson had conceived a subtler and more effective way of performing the function that he had set himself in the Memorandum. He was to contain the van, and, as we shall see, his infallible eye for a situation told him that by far the best way of concealing his intention from the enemy and holding them in uncertainty was to keep on as he was in line-ahead. This at least is what he did, and accordingly, about this time, Villeneuve began to see that the two British *pelotons* were developing into two lines ahead, directed, the one about his own flagship, the other at his own rear squadron, which, since Gravina was forming the true rear, was now in fact part of the centre.²

The relative alignment of the two fleets was now becoming what it remained till the moment of impact. The two British lines, owing to the manner in which they were being formed, had the appearance of converging slightly upon the enemy's centre, their mean direction being now about east. The extremities of the allied fleet bore from

¹ All the French plans show this, and it is confirmed by such ships of Nelson's division as give their courses, *e.g.* *Orion* at 7.0, E. by N. ; 8.0, E. ; 9.0, E. by S. ; 10-11, E. by S.½ S. ; 12.0 E.S.E. See also p. 420 *note*.

² Villeneuve himself says at 9.0. The official abstract puts it as late as 11.0.

each other roughly about north-north-east and south-south-west, with an increasing sag to leeward. The wind had settled at about west, varying sometimes a little north of it, and sometimes south,¹ and as the van ship hauled up to it, and her successors edged into her wake, the general

AB. *Ligne de plus près* (6 points from the wind) with the wind at W.N.W.

AC. The same with wind at W.

DD. Gravina's squadron trying to form in Villeneuve's wake.

EE. Lines of Nelson's and Collingwood's approach.

Note.—The *ligne de plus près* AB had not been correctly formed after the fleet wore. The mean alignment was about N.N.E. and S.S.W.

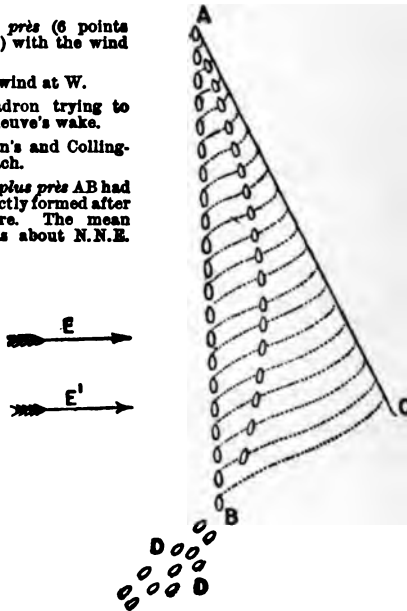


DIAGRAM TO SHOW HOW THE ALLIED LINE BECAME CONVEX
IN TRYING TO RE-FORM FOR THE SHIFT OF WIND

alignment of the van half of the line was about north and south, but a little west of north in the extreme van as it is shown in all the French official plans. The rest of the fleet would have had an alignment curving gradually from the centre to almost south-west in the extreme rear. As the

¹ *Neptune* gives it W. by S., *Thunderer* (at 12.15) S.W. by S.

British lines were approaching on a mean course about east, their general direction to all tactical intent was perpendicular to the central portion of the enemy at which they were aiming.

For Nelson this fortuitous malformation of the enemy's line was very opportune. It went far to remove the main difficulties of carrying out the fundamental ideas of the intended attack. But he cannot have foreseen it, for it arose from a chance shift of wind. Nor can it have influenced him in the first hours of his approach. The signal which produced it was not made by Villeneuve till ten o'clock, and even when the dislocation commenced Nelson was too far away to be able to realise its effect at once. By eleven o'clock, however, after the movement had been in progress an hour, it must have become pronounced, and by that time Nelson was not more than three miles from the enemy's centre.¹ We cannot therefore place his recognition of the crescent formation later than that hour nor much before. In any case it is impossible to trace any influence it had on the British attack. There were no fresh signals and no alteration of course. Both Nelson and Collingwood held on as they were with every stitch of canvas set, and making with their utmost effort between two and three knots.²

Collingwood's division continued to struggle for the

Lieutenant G. L. Browne of the *Victory* wrote: "At 11.0 we were about three miles from the enemy.—*Great Sea Fights*, ii. 197.

¹ The fastest ships were doing a little over three knots, the slower ones about two. *Prince*, a very slow ship, gives her speed at two knots except between 9.0 and 10.0, when it was only one. *Neptune*, who at first had been doing over three, dropped to 1½ after 9.0, and so continued. *Minotaur*, who had been doing 1½, increased to 2 at 9.0. *Spartiate*, her second, did 2 throughout. *Dreadnought*, another slow three-decker, did only one knot till 10.0, when she increased up to 2 at noon. *Tonnant* did 2 and a little over, and 2½ as she came into action. *Revenge*, a fast ship, increased from about 1½ to 2½ and 3½ as she came into action. *Defence*, a connecting ship, who had to run down from the northward on a wind, only did one. *Conqueror* did 2 throughout. *Swiftsure* at 11.0 increased from 2 to 3. *Victory* and *Royal Sovereign* apparently were doing 3 at the finish.

formation he had last signalled, but certainly without undue attention to accurate stations. Indeed, in the unformed rear at least his captains interpreted their chiefs succession of signals with characteristic freedom as an intimation that he wished them to get into action as quickly and simultaneously as possible. It was the true spirit of the British service in its later manifestations, and as Codrington frankly says, "We all scrambled into battle as soon as we could."¹ As for Nelson's division, it continued to trail after him, swarming roughly into line as best it could.² No check was made. As they approached the fire zone, where the utmost impetus was vital, the speed was even increased. Collingwood signalled for more sail, and Nelson promptly responded still more emphatically with "Make all sail possible with safety to the masts." Laggards were left far behind, and the two old friends in exultant rivalry seemed bent on nothing but to see who could be first into the furnace that awaited them.

Nelson apparently had not yet made up his mind exactly what he was going to do, and probably, as the Memorandum suggests, did not intend to decide till he saw what the situation called for at the last moment. He was still steering steadily for the centre just ahead of the *San-*

¹ *Life of Codrington*, vol. ii. p. 80. Similarly *Defiance* enters in her Log simply "Standing for the enemy's fleet," without the usual specification of the actual course.

² Some of the ships give their courses in detail. Of the lee division, *Tonnant's* was E. by S. all the time. *Revenge*, after her signal was made, shifted from E. by N. to E., and did not change again. *Scripsaire's* course was at 7.0 N.E.; at 8. N.E. by E.; at 10.0, E.N.E., and at 11.0, after Collingwood's last signal, E.S.E. *Defence* came down from the northward S.S.W., S. by W., and at 10.0 was going S.S.E. again. *Prince* did, E., E. by N., E.N.E., and at 10.0 turned E. *Dreadnought* did, at 7.0 E.N.E.; at 8.0 E. by N., and at 10.0 shifted to E. by S. $\frac{1}{4}$ S., and kept it till she came into action. The ill-kept Log of the *Royal Sovereign* gives her course as S. 80 E. throughout. In Nelson's division *Téméraire* only gives N. 34 E. *Neptune*, at 7.0 N.E. by E., and, after 8.0, E. $\frac{1}{4}$ N.; *Conqueror*, E. $\frac{1}{4}$ S. till noon; *Orion*, at 7.0 E. by N.; at 8.0, E.; at 9.0, E. by S., then for two hours E. by S. $\frac{1}{4}$ S., and at noon E.S.E. *Spartiate* did, N.E. by E. till noon, and *Minotaur* must have done the same. *Britannia* went E. till noon, and then turned E.S.E.

tísima Trinidad, the largest ship in the allied fleet.¹ The functions he had assigned himself, it will be remembered, were not only to contain the van but also to envelop the Commander-in-chief. But as yet the Commander-in-chief could not be found. He had not shown his flag and Nelson's main anxiety at this time seems to have been to ascertain his position. "Although," says James, "every glass on board the *Victory* was put in requisition to discover the flag of the French Commander-in-chief, all the answers to Nelson's repeated questions on the subject ended in disappointment."² James must have had this from an eye-witness, and it affords a perfectly simple explanation of why Nelson made for the *Santisima Trinidad*. He was then under the belief that Decrès had come to take the chief command over Villeneuve's head, and it was natural to seek him in the largest ship in the fleet which was also a new comer.³

¹ All the reports of the Allied Centre, as well as the French official "Abstract," agree in this. Colonel Desbrière, however (*Trafalgar*, p. 208), thought the evidence on the whole shows that Nelson's division made as high as the vessel at the head of the allied line, and then fled off under the fire of the van on the opposite tack and at half gun-shot, till the moment he attacked the stern of the *Bucentaure*. But he only cites the reports of *Intrépide* and *Scipion*, and neither of these, if read in the light of Prigny's warning as to squadronal designations, appears to support his view. *Scipion* says Nelson's column "se portait sur le centre de l'avant-garde," by which may well be meant the centre of the van half of the line, that is, just ahead of the *S. Trinidad*. *Intrépide* says no more than that Nelson "manœuvrait pour couper en arrière du *Bucentaure*." Dumanoir, like the *Scipion*, says he made "sur le centre de notre avant-garde," and refers to a plan which shows the *Victory* steering to cut the line ahead of *S. Trinidad*. Of Nelson's alleged feint on the van of the line there is really no evidence whatever except that of Codrington. See *post*, p. 422-3. ² Vol. iii. 397.

³ See Blackwood to his wife: Nicolas, vii. 226. "Would to God he had lived to see his prizes and the Admirals he had taken—three in all—amongst them the French Commander-in-chief, who, I am sorry to say, is Villeneuve and not Decrès." An unpublished letter of Nelson's chaplain, Scott, confirms his preoccupation with the capture of the Commander-in-chief. "It was what he particularly aimed at," he says; but adds, "As, however, the Frenchman never hoisted his flag it was not yet known [i.e. when Nelson died] that the Admiral was taken." In this Scott was certainly mistaken. "I never went," he says, "higher than the middle deck. . . . I was quartered below with the Surgeon." He must, then, have gone to his station before Villeneuve showed his flag. There can be no doubt it was shown, as the French and Spanish reports agree, or that it was seen by Nelson; for *Spartiate*, the last ship in the

A different explanation, however, related to his function of containing the van, has come of late years to confuse our appreciation of Nelson's tactics. Because he made for a point higher up the line than the one he eventually attacked, it is said he was making a feint on the van in order to hold it inactive. The sole contemporary evidence of this is an entry in the Master's Log of Codrington's ship the *Orion*. "The *Victory*, after making a feint of attacking the van, hauled to starboard to reach the centre." This in itself contains no actual assertion that Nelson altered his course to port before turning to starboard. But when questioned on the point by Nicolas in his old age Codrington said, "He was under the impression that he was expressly instructed by Nelson that he himself would probably make a feint of attacking the van" (instead of using the Advance Squadron for that purpose, as he had intended originally). "I have no doubt," he added, "of the *Victory* having hauled out to port for a short space." He also said he remembered calling his First Lieutenant's attention to it at the time, which would account for the isolated entry in *Orion's* Log. Then, after giving some corroborative details about Nelson's studding-sails, he went on to say that it was this movement to port which occasioned the *Victory* to suffer so severely from the raking fire of several ships ahead of the centre. Evidently then his memory was failing him, for the ships that raked Nelson were those for which he had been steering all along and which he eventually attacked.¹ No one who was at Nelson's side knew anything

line, records: "12.59, *Victory* bearing down between a Spanish four-decker and a French two-decker with an Admiral's flag at the main" (*Captains' Logs, P.R.O.*). In her Master's Journal is the note: "The watch, the minutes of the action was taken by, appears to have been 34 minutes too fast." It was half-an-hour faster still by *Victory's* time, which makes *Spartiate's* 12.59 equal *Victory's* 11.55.

¹ See Nicolas, vii. 154, note. The only other mention of Nelson's altering his course is when he altered it to starboard, e.g. *Thunderer's* Log: "Observed the *Victory* alter her course and lead . . . towards the enemy's centre."—*Ibid.*, 202, note.

of such a manœuvre. Besides his own staff, he had three frigate captains on his quarterdeck, and not one of them says a word about it. Nor does it appear from any of the enemy's reports. Like the original entry in the *Orion's* Log they duly record the turn to starboard, but not the alleged one to port. It is impossible indeed to believe it ever took place, and till better evidence is forthcoming it must be dismissed as a by-product of Codrington's enthusiastic admiration of his chief.

Nor does this conclusion rest on negative evidence alone. We have the direct testimony of Blackwood that what Nelson had in his mind at this time was not a feint on the van but a real attack, and that this attack involved if anything a preliminary turn to starboard and not to port. In fact it was well before the time of Codrington's alleged feint that Nelson made up his mind what he was going to do, and it was one of the curiosities of the oft-told story that this remarkable decision has been almost ignored. Yet there can be no doubt about it. The *Euryalus* records that at 11.40 she repeated a telegraph message from Nelson to this effect: "I intend to push or go through the end of the enemy's line to prevent them from getting into Cadiz."¹ It is obviously not entered verbatim. James, who also knew of it, and was told it was made to Collingwood, gives it thus: "I intend to pass through the van of the enemy's line to prevent him from getting into Cadiz."² Such a signal is certainly startling. No other ship records it, and yet it is impossible to believe it was not made when it appears in the Log of the senior repeating frigate. Whatever its actual words, it can only have meant that Nelson had abandoned his plan of attack on the rear half of the enemy in favour of that recommended by Howe

¹ The time here seems to be much the same as *Victory's*. *Euryalus* repeated, "England expects, &c." at 11.56. Pascoe says it was made about 11.45.

² Vol. iii. p. 392.

and Kempenfelt for engaging a numerically superior fleet.¹ It is possible that the signal which Villeneuve had just made to his van to make more sail had renewed Nelson's abiding apprehension that his enemy meant to avoid a decisive action by slipping back into Cadiz. To thwart the movement he would attack the van, as he had told Collingwood to attack the rear, and would leave the centre—on Torrington's plan—unengaged.

Such a sudden and complete variation of his plan—though characteristic enough of Nelson's genius and expressly foreshadowed by the Memorandum—is difficult enough to believe of itself. But there is the further objection that it involved the abandonment of another cardinal point of his plan. The new attack sacrificed entirely the idea of enveloping the Commander-in-chief. This consideration, however, so far from throwing doubt on the signal which *Euryalus* records, goes far to corroborate it. For it so happens that Nelson had at the moment good reason for not seeking the Commander-in-chief in the centre. Collingwood had just telegraphed to him "that the enemy's chief appears to command in a frigate."² Collingwood then must have read in Nelson's message a natural answer to his own. If Villeneuve was not in the centre it was not there a decision was to be sought, but in the van, and for this reason. The most serious change which Nelson's new idea made in the plan of attack was the apparent abandonment of his own con-

¹ The best contemporary French historian, a veteran of the older wars had no doubt, after his careful and sagacious study of the battle, that this was what Nelson meant, though he naturally regarded it as a feint. "Nelson first made a feint of attacking the van and rear of the fleet. Then he re-assembled his force on the centre and abandoned the fate of the action to the intelligence of his captains."—Mathieu Dumas, *Précis des Evénements Militaires*, xiv. 408.

² Lieutenant G. L. Browne of the *Victory*: *Great Sea Fights*, ii. 196. He records it as made at 10.40. James says it was "a few minutes before the action commenced," but Browne says distinctly it was at 10.40, and he was assistant flag-lieutenant.

taining function on which the success of Collingwood's attack depended. But, in truth, it involved no real abandonment. The natural consequence of his altered form of attack was that the enemy's centre would stand on at once to relieve the van. Indeed this was the inherent weakness of all attempts to concentrate on the van. Nelson would probably be doubled on, but that would bring on a *mêlée* and Collingwood would be left free to "complete the business of the rear."

There seems, then, to be no sufficient reason to reject the explicit statement of *Euryalus's* Log. It was just at this time that Nelson revoked his permission to *Téméraire* to pass ahead of him and ordered her to take station astern.¹ In other words, at the last moment he strictly re-formed his column as though he intended to break the line in line-ahead, and this we know from an unimpeachable source was actually his intention. The enemy's van was just opening fire on him at long range, and he dismissed his three frigate captains to inform the ships in his rear exactly what his intentions were. Blackwood went straight alongside the *Neptune* in his boat and informed Captain Fremantle that Nelson's intention was "to cut through the enemy's line about the thirteenth or fourteenth ship, and then to make sail on the larboard tack for their van."² Now, about the thirteenth ship we know a wide gap had opened in the enemy's line owing to ships to leeward not being able to get into station.³ Nelson clearly intended to seize the opportunity of this

¹ *Neptune* (Master's Log). "11.50, *Téméraire* took station astern of *Victory*, *Neptune* next." *Téméraire* (Captain's Log). "Noon, *Victory* to *Téméraire*. 269, with *Victory's* pennants." *Téméraire's* clock was 20 minutes ahead of *Victory's*. Captain Harvey says he had the signal about 15 minutes before the *Victory* opened fire. That would make it about 11.45.

² *Neptune's* log puts it at 11.50: Nicolas, vii. 186. It was 7 minutes before *Royal Sovereign* opened fire, which *Victory* says was at 11.40.

³ *Rapport du Capitaine de vaisseau Lucas (Redoubtable)*: Desbrière, *Trafalgar, App.*, 196; and *ante*, p. 407.

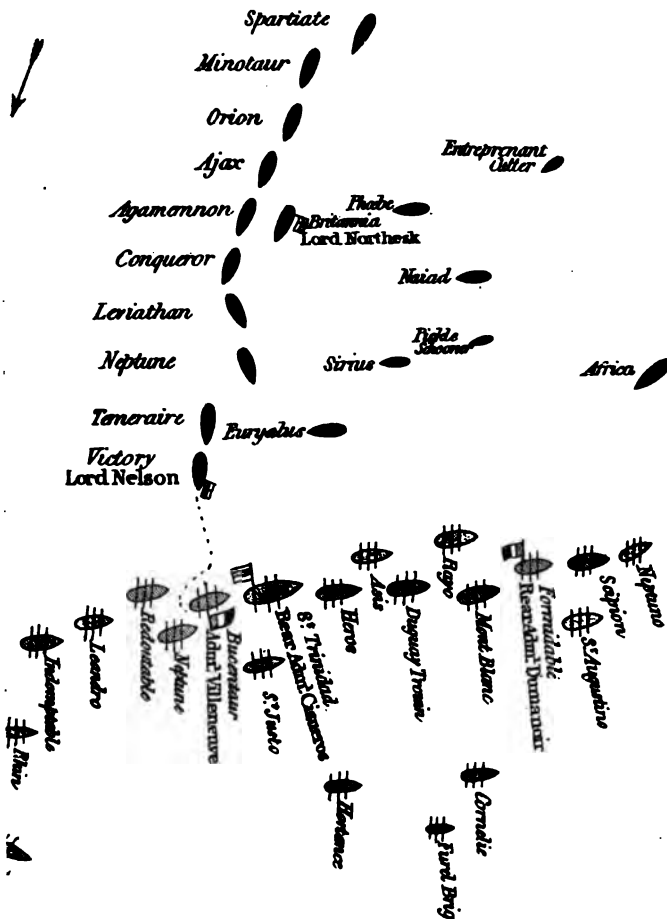
break in the line to pass through it and then to run up the van and engage it from to leeward, crippling each unit as he passed with his massed three-deckers, and leaving them a prey to his weaker following.

It was a conception entirely worthy of him and entirely in accord with the fundamental principle of his plan. It fully and worthily explains his neglect to deploy—his persistent clinging to his line-ahead, which so much effort has been made to explain away. For the purpose of containing the van it served admirably. Till the last moment it was impossible for the enemy to tell whether or not the van was his objective, for to the last he himself had not decided. Both van and centre were equally threatened. For a regular feint there was no need, and certainly none was made. If, as several witnesses clearly record, he was steering for the *Santisima Trinidad*, his intended movement for the gap a ship or two astern of her would mean a short turn to starboard before hauling to the wind on the opposite tack; and so far from being a feint on the van, it would if anything amount to a feint on the centre. But the whole meaning of the decision is this. At the last moment his unmatched eye for a battle had seized a weakness in the enemy's position and with perfect mastery he meant to deliver his attack accordingly. It was only by keeping his division in line-ahead that such a sudden stroke was possible. Surely it needs no excuse. Leadership could not well rise higher.

This then was undoubtedly the last order which Nelson conveyed to his fleet before engaging. But no sooner were the frigate captains away with it than he saw reason to change his resolution. As the fleets drew together Villeneuve had signalled to engage as soon as they were in effective range, and then, as the rear opened fire on Collingwood, he and all the other Admirals displayed their flags. The Commander-in-chief was confessed. He was for Nelson

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and Bronté, and no one else. His station was tenth in the actual line, and in an instant Nelson, instead of making for the gap astern of her, was heading to pass between the *Bucentaure* and *Trinidad*, her second ahead.

For the moment at least it would seem he had abandoned his project of attacking the van, for the original plan of the Memorandum. The little *Africa* was coming in from the northward and he signalled her to engage the leading ship of the enemy, as though he felt he must sacrifice her to keeping the van quiet till he had settled the business of the enemy's two flagships. But this was not so easy. His sudden reversion to his original idea of enveloping the Commander-in-chief was as suddenly foiled. Villeneuve seeing his purpose, hauled to the wind, and drawing ahead into a line of bearing on the *Trinidad*, closed the interval which Nelson had chosen. He had to stand on down the line for the next opening exposed to a terrific concentration of fire from the group round the *Bucentaure*. It was too warm work to last long, as Nelson said. The enemy were looking every moment to see both him and Collingwood crushed by the mass of fire. The wind had nearly dropped. Astern of the *Bucentaure* was the gap through which he had originally intended to lead the line for his attack on the van, but now there was no more than a regular interval as difficult as the other. The *Redoutable*, to avert the threatened attack on the flagship, had devotedly forced her way close to Villeneuve's quarter. There was no possibility of passing clear between the two ships, but if Nelson was to have the Commander-in-chief it must be this or nothing, and in desperation he put up his helm and crashed in under the *Bucentaure's* stern.

That was the end of his tactics. If he still retained his purpose of engaging the van from to leeward, the bold move of the *Redoutable* had completely foiled him. Though magnificently supported by *Téméraire*, who almost touched

his stern, he failed—in the tactical sense at least—to break the line. Running hard aboard the *Redoubtable* he simply stuck in the enemy's formation, incapable of leading the movement if he had had a mind, or indeed of any further manœuvre. *Neptune*, it is true, followed *Téméraire* through the line astern of *Bucentaure*, raking her as she passed; then hauled her wind to the northward in accordance with Nelson's last directions by Blackwood and settled down with the *Santisima Trinidad*. But the movement went little further, and the weather column, as it surged up against the enemy's clubbed formation, simply flattened itself out with the impact.

In intention, risk, and daring, it was in the end an unprecedented vertical attack in line-ahead upon a closely formed and even reduplicated line of battle. To some slight extent, it is true, its perpendicular character was at the last moment modified. So closely did *Téméraire* and *Neptune* follow their chief that his sudden movements forced them upon his port and starboard quarters to avoid running foul of him.¹ In the rear, moreover, the line had never been formed accurately, and his captains hurried up to port and starboard of him more like a pack of wolves than a formed fleet. Still in tactical principle no attack could have been weaker—none could have offended more seriously against the principle of simultaneous impact. To all tactical intent it ended as it had begun, by both columns making the onslaught which Hawke had devised for a flying enemy.

¹ The *Santisima Trinidad's* report (Desbrière, *Trafalgar*, App. 365) gives the situation thus: The *Victory* steered for the combined centre "formando con el *Téméraire* y el *Neptune* de tres pontes una linea casi paralela de la que formaban en aquella parte el *Bucentaure* por su proa el *Trinidad* y por la de este el *Héros*." As these three ships had got into line of bearing the meaning seems to be that Nelson and his two consorts were also in a line of bearing or irregular line abreast, roughly parallel to that formed by *Trinidad* and her two seconds. Cf. Codrington: "Our line pressed so much upon each other as to be obliged to go bow and quarter line instead of ahead."—*Life*, i. 64.

Hazardous, even desperate, as seemed Nelson's use of it, it was in truth the outcome of heroic judgment and insight. Both risk and advantage had been accurately weighed. The enormous mass of gun power at the head of Nelson's line dominated the counter-convergence of fire, and brought on the mêlée round the French Admiral which Nelson required, while the rear of his division as it stretched on into action made it impossible for Dumanoir to come down directly without submitting himself to a crossing of the T.

In Collingwood's case the risk and daring of the attack was even greater than with Nelson. He had no mass of three-deckers in his van, and the speed of his ship and the steepness of his line of bearing left him to suffer the first shock with even less support than his chief received. Not content, moreover, with the dozen ships which Nelson had allotted to his division, he took more than half the original allied rear as well as Gravina's advanced squadron—sixteen ships in all. Three of them were so far to leeward as to be out of the line, and all were so much crowded that the twelfth ship was not easy to distinguish. Somewhere about the right place was a Spanish three-decker, flying a Vice-Admiral's flag, and under such temptation a man of Collingwood's spirit could scarcely be expected to count with scrupulous exactness. The result was that he too struck the actual centre where the enemy's formation was practically at right angles to his line of advance. "About noon," he says, "the *Royal Sovereign* opened a fire on the 12th, 13th, 14th, and 15th ships from the enemy's rear and stood on with all sail to break the enemy's line. A quarter past twelve altered course to port;" that is, at the last moment he changed his direction higher up the line and ran through under the stern of the Spanish Vice-flagship *Santa Anna*.¹

¹ She was first-rate of 112 guns, bearing the flag of Vice-Admiral de Alava, and according to Colonel Desbrière was thirteenth from the rear in actual line: *Trafalgar*, p. 207.

For all his prompt attempt to deploy he was unsupported for a quarter of an hour. So far from establishing a concentration on the enemy's rear, he himself was exposed to the concentrated fire of four powerful ships, but in the exhilaration of having beaten his chief in the wild race he could only cry to his flag captain, "What would Nelson give to be here!" He was first into action and the rest mattered not. *Belleisle*, with *Mars* close at hand, was first to bring him relief. Then he was left alone with the *Santa Anna*, while his consort was cut to pieces and dismasted by a powerful concentration in her turn.

Apart from Collingwood's refusal to check his onset, the advance had been too nearly vertical for the line of bearing to produce anything like unity of impact behind him. Almost every ship in the first half of his division met with a similar reception. "Instead of doubling on the enemy," says Senhouse, who was in the *Conqueror*, the fourth or fifth of Nelson's line, "the British were on that day themselves doubled and trebled on; and the advantage of applying an overwhelming force collectively it would seem was totally lost. The *Victory*, *Téméraire*, *Sovereign*, *Belleisle*, *Mars*, *Colossus*, and *Bellerophon* were placed in such a situation at the onset, that nothing but the most heroic gallantry and practical skill with the guns could have extricated them. . . . The position of the Combined Fleet at one time was precisely that in which the British were desirous of being placed; that is, to have part of an opposing fleet doubled on and separated from the main body."¹ The same could be said of other ships astern of the *Colossus*, such as the *Revenge*. What Codrington saw from Nelson's line—and he says he was placed so as to have a specially clear view—was the ships of the lee division coming up one by one and attacking the remainder

¹ *Macmillan's Magazine*, vol. lxxxi. 424.

of the enemy's rear in succession.¹ Owing to differences of speed and the fact that Collingwood's squadron was still unformed when he ordered the line of bearing, the ships came into action not only one after the other, but at irregular intervals—so irregularly indeed that the enemy thought they were being attacked by distinct groups. One was Collingwood's own, another seemed to follow the *Revenge*, while a third was headed by the *Dreadnought* and *Polyphemus*. So closely clubbed was the allied formation by Gravina's pressing on to support the centre, that though the line was penetrated in all parts there still remained yet another group to double on the extreme rear.

It was nearly an hour before the action became general, and things were reduced to a more equal footing. By that time some twenty-two British vessels must have been in action with the twenty-two French and Spanish that had been cut off. It was a *mêlée* at pistol-shot all along the line, in which the captains on both sides supported and relieved one another with brilliance and devotion, and with as much skill of manœuvre as mangled rigging, the clouds of hanging smoke, and that almost breathless afternoon permitted. Each side extorted bursts of admiration from the other. It was a fair fight against foes worth fighting, and with no advantage on either side, except in the superior sea training and gunnery of the British. It was only gradually by sheer hard fighting that Nelson's and Collingwood's men redressed the disadvantage of the impetuous attack. In an hour or so they began to reap its fruits, and to establish a domination over the raging fire into which they had flung themselves one by one.

All this time the enemy's van had made no movement to intervene. There some ten or eleven ships, practically

¹ *Orion's Journal*: Nicolas, vii. 192, note. What Codrington wrote at the time is of course good evidence, to be distinguished from the memories of his old age.

untouched save for the little *Africa* as she ran down from the northward to get into her station, were held inactive by Rear-Admiral Dumanoir, in spite of what every one regarded as his plain duty. The censures that he earned may rest in the grave of acquittal which his court-martial awarded him. We are only concerned with what he did—and deeply concerned, for here is the measure by which we must gauge the value and effectiveness of the “containing” element in Nelson’s plan.

It was not for more than two hours after the action had begun—one hour after it had become general—that, in response to Villeneuve’s repeated signals, Dumanoir began to tack. Till then Nelson’s bewildering method of engaging held him in uncertainty of what the weather division was going to do. But when it was clear that the strange tactics meant an attack on the centre in column, he saw, so he says, the possibility of cutting off Nelson’s rearmost ships—a danger to which the line-ahead attack obviously exposed them. It was a risk Nelson had calculated and taken with a light heart. “It must be some time,” he wrote in the Memorandum, “before they could perform a manœuvre to bring their force compact to attack any part of the British fleet,” and so it proved.

The wind was so light that it was only by using boats that Dumanoir’s ships could get round at all, and it was nearly three o’clock before they were standing down. By that time the back of the Allies’ splendid resistance was broken. Not a mast was left in the flagships which Nelson and Collingwood had attacked, and all three of them had struck. Still there was a chance; for the British ships which had borne the brunt of the struggle were for the most part dismasted hulks, and Nelson was lying mortally wounded. In the extreme rear at any rate, if not in the centre, there were possibilities of effective interference. Here the action was comparatively fresh, and Gravina was

desperately holding his own against a concentration that was steadily increasing. He himself, like Nelson, had been laid low with a wound that was to prove mortal, but the chief of his staff was maintaining the struggle with obstinate courage, and there was nothing to tell that Villeneuve's right hand was not still strong to save the situation. The promise of this hope, and the danger of the honoured Spanish Admiral were so great, that when Dumanoir led down to windward only four units followed him—three French and the Spanish *Neptuno*, the headmost ship. Nearly all the rest made for Gravina to leeward, and one, the *Intrépide*, went straight into the mêlée that was dying round the *Bucentaure*. This, in the opinion of Villeneuve's staff, was the course all should have taken.¹ It was the most direct and the surest way to renew close action while there was yet a ray of hope. But as it was, the daring *Intrépide* was checked by the little *Africa*, which had run the gauntlet of the enemy's van successfully, and had now reached the centre. The gallant Frenchman was thus held unsupported, and was quickly captured by some fresh ships—*Ajax* and *Orion* being two of them—which Nelson's Rear-Admiral Lord Northesk seems to have led up in the *Britannia*.²

By the time Dumanoir was well set on his course there were only the last two ships of Nelson's column, *Spartiate* and *Minotaur*, not in action, and it was these vessels the

¹ See the plan attached to Prigny's report, No. 4, Desbrière, *Trafalgar*, App. 142, and *ante*, p. 399.

² *Life of Codrington*, i. 61. Lord Northesk's part in battle is very obscure. He claims to have engaged ten minutes after Nelson, "three of the enemy's ships having opened their fire on us while edging (*sic*) down."—*Log of Britannia*: "At 3.0," it says, "passed through the line." This suggests he engaged for two hours at considerable range. Collingwood placed him last in his official list, but *Spartiate* and *Minotaur* were certainly astern of him. Magendie in the plan attached to his report places him fourth—possibly his real place in the order of battle. But the most authoritative lists and plans put him sixth, with *Ajax* and *Orion* following. See *Appendix F*.

French Rear-Admiral thought he could cut off. They saw the danger, but it was not their own they saw. It was the critical position of the flagships and the *Téméraire*, as they lay almost helpless wrecks and cumbered with their prizes. Captain Mansfield in the *Minotaur*, the slower ship of the two, was leading, for the principle of the line-ahead had been preserved to the end. Seeing there was not a moment to lose, Sir Francis Laforey, in the *Spartiate*, begged leave to pass her, and so the two devoted men held straight on across Dumanoir's bows, raking him at pistol-shot as they passed, and then hove-to to leeward between him and the British Admirals. And there they held their ground, engaging the four French ships as they passed and forcing them to keep their wind. It was a splendid bit of work, two seventy-fours standing up to three seventy-fours and two eightys, and it was done on their own initiative in the true spirit of the Memorandum.

No moment in the action, except the first, was more critical. The *Victory* and *Royal Sovereign* had each but a single mast standing, and were both unmanageable. The *Téméraire* was a hulk absolutely helpless. The *Britannia* had passed through to engage the ships to leeward and could not have returned, and only the *Neptune* and a couple of crippled two-deckers remained in a case to resist Dumanoir's attack. But this was far from the worst. Collingwood had already been warned that Nelson was dangerously wounded, and now in the strain of the crisis, when no one could see how it would end, Blackwood came on board the *Royal Sovereign* to break the terrible news that he was dead. The soul of the battle had sped, but, acute as was the shock to Collingwood, not for one moment did he lose head or heart. He was now in command. In his hand it rested to save his friend's imperilled victory.

The *Thunderer*, one of the last of his own squadron, was looming up out of the smoke with all standing. Her part

in the action serves well to illustrate the kind of concentration which the attack in succession was now producing. She began firing her starboard guns at the extreme rear at 1.15; at two she was alongside a two-decker that had been already engaged; and in a quarter of an hour she had brought down all her masts and forced her to strike. In another quarter of an hour she had served a second crippled two-decker in the same way. Next was Gravina's shattered flagship, that after getting rid of the *Dreadnought* was hotly defending herself against the *Revenge*. Bearing up she passed under her stern, and raked her so severely as to force her finally to run to leeward out of action. She then hauled her wind and passed up the line as she saw the enemy's van about to come down.¹ At the same moment *Minotaur* and *Spartiate* were coming up into action, and Collingwood's first signal as commander-in-chief was to these three ships to tack and engage Dumanoir's five that were coming down to windward upon the centre and were then barely three-quarters of a mile away. "Set every sail we were able," says the *Thunderer*, who naturally had not come off unscathed. "In passing cheered the *Victory*." *Minotaur* and *Spartiate*, as we know, were anticipating the order, and were already engaged with Commodore Valdez in the *Neptuno*.² By a desperate effort both *Victory* and *Royal Sovereign* got some guns to bear, and so did some of the two-deckers. *Neptune*, too, was soon ready, and Dumanoir, finding how much bite was left in the apparently helpless centre and that *Bucentaure* had struck, held on as he was to see what could be done in the rear, abandoning the *Neptuno* to the mercies of *Minotaur* and *Spartiate*.

¹ *Thunderer*, Captain's Log, P.R.O.

² Collingwood's Journal: *Great Sea Fights*, ii. 203. He says he signalled after 3.30. See also Logs of *Minotaur* and *Spartiate*, *Ibid.*, 250 and 270. *Thunderer* says she got a verbal order after 3.30 (Nicolas, vii. 202). For Dumanoir's account, see Desbrière: *Trafalgar*, App. 152. The signals at this interesting time unfortunately are missing from *Euryalus's* Log, and *Téméraire* ceased to record anything after 12.30.

But in the rear, too, Collingwood was ready for him. His hand was as steady on the action as ever. Seeing what Dumanoir was threatening, he made the general signal to come to the wind in succession on the larboard tack.¹ The consequence was that by the time Dumanoir was in a position to attack the rear he saw half-a-dozen ships hauling out to form a new line to windward. To sink his spirit still further, he could see Gravina's flagship clearly bearing away out of action and flying the signal for the fleet to rally round her. Here at least was a good reason for Dumanoir to hold on and try to join her to leeward round the British rear. But again his heart failed him. The response to Collingwood's signal had assumed so threatening an aspect, and Gravina and the ships rallying round him were soon so far on their way to Cadiz, that he dared not make the attempt, and giving up the action for lost, he held on to the southward for the Straits. As for the rest of his squadron that had tried to get down to leeward, they were quickly headed off by the *Britannia* and her consorts, who pursued them towards Cadiz, capturing one and crippling others. Then came Collingwood's signal to haul to the wind, and it amounted to a recall.²

But for this more might undoubtedly have been done. Gravina's flagship would certainly have been taken, for she was now unmanageable and in tow. But to say nothing of the grand prizes, the situation of the dismantled British ships on a leeshore and with signs of a coming gale, was far too critical for anything more to be attempted. Every ship that could steer or make sail was required to assist

¹ *Log of the Dreadnought*. "At 4.5 made and repeated 101 general" (=about 3.35 *Victory's* time). *Phæbe* (frigate) says she repeated it from the *Victory* at 3.20 (=3.40 *Victory's* time). *Victory* still had her miszen standing at that time, and probably repeated the signal. The signification was: "Come to the wind in succession on the larboard tack after the leading ship, when arrived in the wake thereof." Read with the accompanying instruction, it was in effect an order for each division to re-form line by tacking or wearing as the circumstances required.

² *Britannia* says she obeyed the signal at 4.30 (=3.40 *Victory's* time).

them, and in Collingwood's judgment the limit of risk had been reached. He did not even deem it possible to anchor, though Nelson had made the preparatory signal before the action began, and it was his last wish that it should be executed. Firing had now everywhere ceased except where the *Neptuno* was making her last effort. Shortly after four she struck, and the most decisive naval action in our history had come to an end.

The enemy's commander-in-chief and two of his flag officers were prisoners in the British fleet. Of the thirty-three of the line which had left Cadiz the day before, only nine got back that night to safety; four were flying for the Straits; leaving no less than twenty on the field of battle, of which seventeen were totally dismantled, thirteen actually in possession of prize crews, and one in flames, while every British flag was still flying.

Thus whether the Plan of Attack was acted on or not, Nelson's tactics were justified. His forecast of their containing capacity was fully realised. The van had not been able to move till too late, and when it did it had failed, as the Memorandum foretold, to bring its force compact upon any part of the British fleet. For the rest we cannot do better than take the deliberate summary of the Spanish Staff, drawn up when all the circumstances were known and after making all allowances for inaccuracy of detail. "The attack," they say, "was upon the centre and rear of our line, and by concentrating their force upon it, they involved the rearguard in a regular action, line to line, doubling our extreme rear and leaving the van out of action."¹ The words give an accurate estimate of the action as it eventually developed. They are also a correct summary of the main idea of the Memorandum. In the eyes of the Spanish Staff that idea was carried out entirely. On

¹ *Diario del navio Principe de Asturias* (Gravina's flagship): Desbrière, *Trafalgar*, App. 387. The passage is a note added subsequently.

the other hand their reports, as well as those of the French, are full of bewildered astonishment that an attack made so recklessly and so regardless of established principle—made in column without any regular deployment—was not crushed in the bud. No ingenuity of deduction can answer this criticism. The approach up to the moment of impact was in tactical effect an end-on approach in line-ahead. Neither the irregularity of Nelson's line nor the accidental broadening of his front at the last moment will alter the fact, nor will Collingwood's well-meant but unexecuted signal for the line of bearing remove it even in his case. In neither line was there any developed deployment before the leading ships were in contact, nor, taking the fleet as a whole, was there any such unity of impact as Nelson had designed in his diagram.

If, then, these were the facts, as all the contemporary evidence agrees, was the battle fought in accordance with the plan of attack or was it not? The answer surely is plain and simple enough, for all the casuistry with which it has been inwebbed. In major tactics it was; in its minor tactics it was not. The main ideas, as the Spanish Staff saw, were fully and triumphantly realised, but the actual method of realising them was not the one Nelson had indicated. Possibly he had discussed the method he used verbally, but of this we know nothing. All we can say is that in the culminating hour of his unmatched experience he flung away the security of scientific deployment, and in its place he staked all on the moral and material advantage of speed and momentum against an enemy apparently unformed and seeking to escape him. The risk he took of having the heads of his two columns isolated by a loss of wind or crushed prematurely by the concentration to which he exposed them naked, almost passed the limits of sober leading. Its justification was its success and the known defects of his opponents. Yet

it may be permitted to doubt whether, if he had realised how much higher was the spirit of his enemy than he expected, he would have dared so greatly. Blackwood lets us see how acutely nervous he was when he recognised how good a face they put upon it, but it was then too late to alter. To check the impetuous attack at the last moment in order to substitute one of lower risk would have been an error of the gravest kind.

Then surely he was right. The lack of training and sea experience in his enemy on which he relied saved him and justified the heroic risk he had taken. Some capable officers, reviewing the tactics afterwards in cold blood, believed, it is true, the hazard was unnecessary, that an hour or so of delay in attaining the position he had designed would have left time enough "to complete the business" and have given even more decisive results. It is a point on which no one can now pass judgment, seeing that it depends on the niceties of a dead art. All we can say is that the risk he took was great—that it was not one he intended to take when he made his plan, nor one that his captains expected. And yet when all is said and done, that final resolution remains as the stroke that above all others touches his leadership with divinity. Such flashes of genius will not submit to reasoned criticism, they are beyond rule or principle, and every effort to measure them by scientific standards can only be lost in the final comment—"It was a glorious victory."

CHAPTER XXV

END OF THE NAVAL CAMPAIGN

THE decision which Pitt's policy required had been obtained. Napoleon's attempt to use his fleet in the Mediterranean had been crushed, but not without cost. Small as it was compared with the results obtained, it was heavy enough to prevent Collingwood from following up at once the instructions which he had inherited from Nelson to support the military operations of the Coalition in Italy.

In the night after the battle the threatening gale came up, and in the two following days increased to such violence that had it not shifted a little to the southward not a single prize nor one of the dismasted victors could have escaped wreck. Three of the vessels which had engaged Nelson and *Téméraire* most hotly went down—*Redoutable*, *Fougueux*, and *Bucentaure* herself. Prisoners had to be released, and with friend and foe working resolutely hand in hand it was only by the most desperate exertions that many of the others could be kept afloat and off the rocks. To increase the difficulty, on the second day Cosmao, one of the finest captains in the French service and the senior officer left unwounded in Cadiz, boldly put out with five of the line and seven cruisers to rescue such of the prizes as were drifting towards the bay. Believing that Dumanoir as well as Gravina had got into Cadiz with ten of the line, Collingwood ordered an equal number to cast off their prizes and form battle order.¹ The French frigates managed to

¹ Collingwood to Cornwallis, Oct. 26th: *Hist. MSS. Com., Various Collections*, vi. 412.

rescue the *Santa Anna* and *Neptuno*, both of which were little better than wrecks, but it was only at a cost which made Nelson's victory more decisive. For in returning to port the *Rayo*, a three-decker, together with one eighty and a seventy-four of Cosmao's squadron, went ashore. Next day the *Donegal*, which just before the battle Nelson had been forced to send into Gibraltar for her needs, rejoined, and together with some of Collingwood's least injured ships began a wholesale destruction of the prizes. There was nothing else to be done. Several that had gone ashore were burnt; even the splendid *Santisima Trinidad* had to be sacrificed. Of the nineteen vessels captured four were recaptured and eleven wrecked or destroyed, and in the end only four were brought into Gibraltar.

By the 24th the gale had abated and Collingwood was able to re-establish the blockade of Cadiz—more for the moral effect than anything else, for he now knew that Dumanoir was not there and that there was almost nothing seaworthy left in the port to blockade. Having got things in hand, one of his first cares was to send away a sloop with the news to Elliot at Naples. His despatch admirably presents the situation and his intentions. "As it is of great importance," he wrote, "to the affairs of Italy and Europe in general that the events which have lately taken place on this coast should be known as soon as possible at the Court at which you reside, I lose no time in informing you, Sir, that on the 19th instant the Combined Fleet sailed from Cadiz, their destination certainly for Italy. On the 21st . . . the action began at noon and after a most severe conflict for three hours the enemy gave way and Admiral Gravina retired with nine ships towards Cadiz; four others (French ships) escaped under Rear-Admiral Dumanoir to the southward and are supposed to have got into the Mediterranean; leaving to his Majesty's squadron twenty sail of the line captured. . . . The most decisive and com-

plete victory that ever was gained over a powerful enemy. Eighteen of the enemy's ships were left without a mast in them, and I will venture to say had the battle been fought in the Ocean far from land and unembarrassed by the rocks and shoals of Trafalgar, there probably would not one of the enemy's ships have escaped. On the 22nd a gale of wind arose which continued for three days, sometimes blowing with extreme fury, dispersed the fleet in all directions, driving most of the captured hulks ashore and two or three were driven into the port of Cadiz. The rest so entirely disabled that I have been under the necessity of burning and sinking them. . . . The Combined Fleet is annihilated. I believe there are not more than four or five ships in Cadiz which can be made ready for sea. . . . I understand there are neither masts, sails, nor cordage to refit them—a shattered fleet and empty magazines. But what has raised their admiration and excited their dread too of the British Flag beyond anything, is the keeping our station before their port after so severe an action, which I have done to convince them that we are not to be removed by their utmost efforts from a station that is necessary to be kept. As soon as I can make the necessary arrangements, I propose coming into the Mediterranean, and if the Spanish squadron of Cartagena is in motion and at sea, to use my utmost endeavours to destroy them also and send to the Italian coast such a force as will check any operations the enemy may have in contemplation there.”¹

There were some who believed he would have been better employed in making his demonstration at Naples without the loss of a day instead of off Cadiz, but after the terrible strain of that exhausting week he probably did all that was humanly possible. “In short,” he wrote to Cornwallis, “my strength is exhausted.”² From the Cartagena

¹ Nicolas, vii. 231: *Buryalus* off Cadiz, Oct. 24th.

² *Hist. MSS. Com., Various Collections*, vi. 412, Oct. 28th.

squadron or Dumanoir's, wherever it might have gone, there was really little to fear as Louis was still somewhere about the Straits, and even if Dumanoir entered the Mediterranean and eluded him, he would certainly have to make for Toulon to refit before he could do anything at Naples.

As a matter of fact he had not entered the Straits. On the 22nd the southerly gale had struck his crippled squadron, and it was found impossible to stand up to it. Towards evening, moreover, he saw sails in the Gut which he believed to be Louis's squadron, and he decided to reach to the westward in hopes of falling in with Allemand. For two days he hunted for him, doing the best he could to refit and stop his leaks, and then on the 25th decided to go northward. On the 29th, as Louis was coming out of the Straits to rejoin Collingwood, he doubled Cape St. Vincent. Neutrals were questioned, but not a word of Allemand could be had, and he stood on for Rochefort in ignorance that Strachan was ahead of him still waiting patiently in eager hope of intercepting the squadron Dumanoir was seeking.

Strachan had remained as we left him in constant touch with Lobb's cruiser line about Vigo till the day of the battle. Then hearing that the ships which Villeneuve had left in Vigo were ready for sea, he had moved away to let them out, and on the 24th had taken station off Finisterre convinced that with Nelson off Cadiz they would try to get north.¹ He was thus excellently placed. Dumanoir's flagship and some others were making so much water that he felt forced to keep near the coast. After passing the latitude of Finisterre early on November 2nd, he was actu-

¹ Cornwallis to Marsden, October 29th, with report of Captain Rodd of the *Indefatigable*, 44: *In-letters*, 129. He had been sent to the westward of the Channel to cover the home-coming convoys, and on September 20th had sighted Allemand in latitude 48° 57' and longitude 18° 19'. Having lost touch he ran back to inform Cornwallis, and meeting Strachan just as he was starting in search of Allemand, was detained by him and taken down to Vigo.

ally in sight of Cape Villano, and though he had stolen past Strachan inshore without being seen, he was at the point of junction of the two British cruiser lines, and as a matter of course quickly found he was being observed.

Two frigates, the *Boadicea* 38 and *Dryad* 36, which seem to have formed part of the Ushant-Finisterre line and must have been on the Finisterre rendezvous, were to the westward, while a third had just passed inshore of him, and was a little to the southward. It was Baker again in the *Phoenix*, with his genius for being in the right place, and another highly interesting piece of cruiser work ensued. After his hairbreadth escape with the *Didon* from Allemand he had nearly been caught by the Combined Fleet as he was trying to get his prize to Gibraltar. Eventually he had stood north again and taken her safely home, to be rewarded for his feat, as the custom was, with a cruise. On October 29th he had left Falmouth for a station to the westward of Scilly, where he was to open sealed orders. On the second day he fell in with a Dane who said he had been detained by Allemand from the 13th to the 15th. He had been released in latitude $37^{\circ} 51'$ and longitude $14^{\circ} 3'$, that is, about 250 miles west-north-west of St. Vincent, and his captors then steered north-west.¹ As we know that Allemand was then on his way to the Canaries, this was a false course to drown his scent. Baker, of course, could not know this. It was the ordinary track to reach the French Atlantic ports, and the inference was that Allemand was somewhere down the Bay making for Rochefort. Baker had not yet reached his allotted station, but so eager was he to let Strachan know his news that he decided to break the seal. He found nothing but a handsome order to proceed to a very profitable cruising ground. Then he did not hesitate a moment. Prize money was flung to the winds and away he went for Ferrol, where he ex-

¹ Captain Baker's Journal enclosed in Strachan's despatch: *Ibid.*, Nov. 5th.

pected to meet with Strachan. Not finding him there he made for the Finisterre rendezvous, with the result that at daylight on November 2nd he found himself, as we have seen, passing inshore of what he believed to be Allemand's squadron.

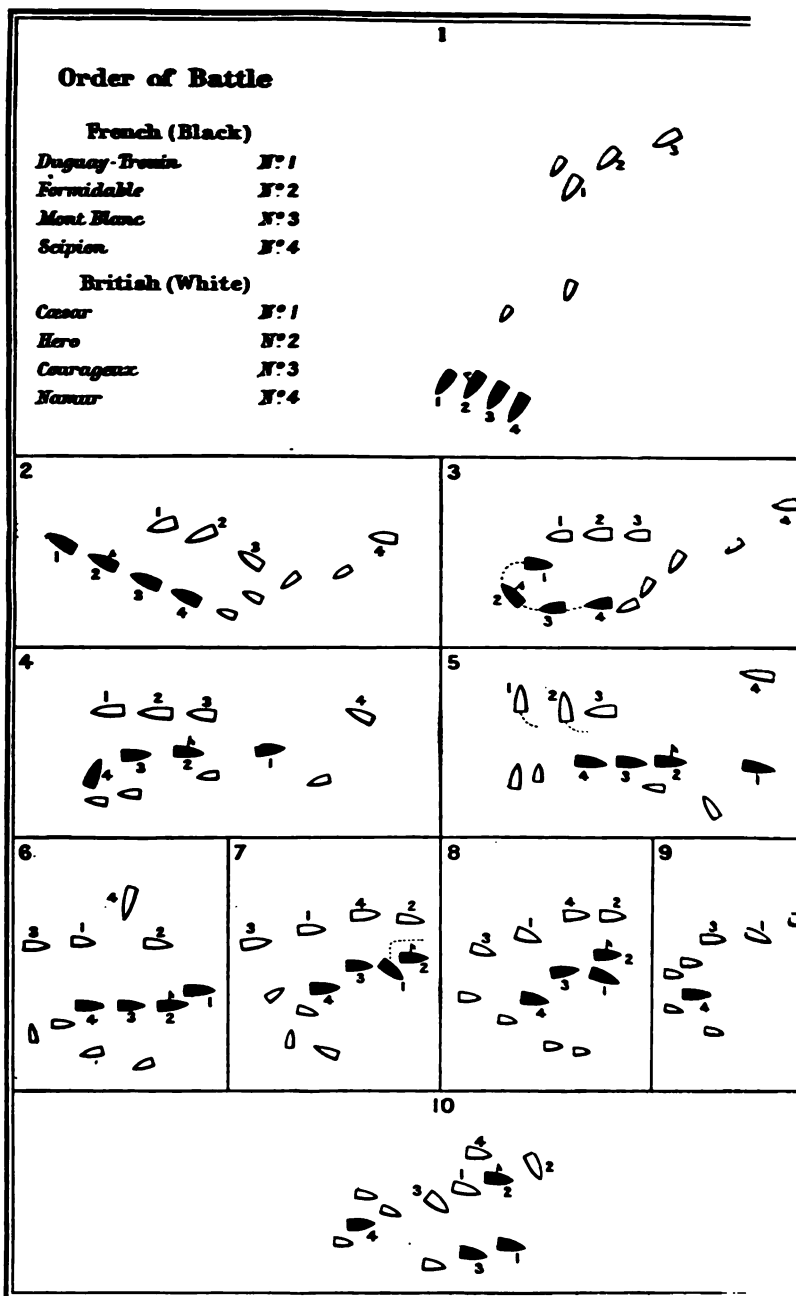
Dumanoir, who was then sailing east-north-east, promptly detached the *Duguay-Trouin* to chase him; but Baker, instead of trying to escape, held on south-west for the regular rendezvous, where he was sure to hear of Strachan. In vain the French ship tried to cut him off. By five o'clock he had passed across her bows to windward, and Dumanoir signalled the recall. During the last two hours of the chase Baker had been firing signal guns, as Dumanoir naturally believed, to the other two frigates, but in fact he had not seen them. What he had sighted was part of Strachan's squadron to the southward. Dumanoir, with all Allemand's luck, must have passed close by him the night before, unseen, for all that Strachan had his squadron widely spread, and but for Baker's activity the fugitives might well have got away. The other two frigates by a strange chance did nothing. It was nearly nine and quite dark before they made out the *Phœnix*, and as they were between her and the enemy, she mistook their recognition signals as coming from Dumanoir's squadron. A little later they saw the squadron for which the *Phœnix* was standing, but again their signals were mistaken, and making sure they were alone between two divisions of Allemand's squadron they stood clear away and were seen no more.¹

Even the *Phœnix* was fired upon before she could make Strachan understand. Luckily it was his flagship, the *Cæsar* 80, that was nearest to her, the rest being scattered far astern. Baker reported he had just been chased by

¹ Strachan took these two vessels for part of the enemy's squadron. "We saw six sail," he wrote to Cornwallis, "and cannot conceive which way the other two went."—*Hist. MSS. Com., Var. Coll.*, vi. 413.

Allemand's squadron, and that they were close by to leeward. "I was delighted," wrote Strachan, "and told him to tell the captains astern I meant to engage at once." So away went the *Phoenix* again to rally the squadron, while Strachan held on after the chase. He could see them in the moonlight standing away in line abreast, but when the moon set he lost them. Dumanoir, in fact, in order to throw him off, altered course to the south-east so soon as it was dark, but Strachan was not deceived. He merely shortened sail till he was joined by two of his seventy-fours, *Hero* and *Courageux*, and one of his frigates, *Æolus* 32, with Lord William Fitzroy still in command. Of the rest of his squadron the *Namur* 74, and *Santa Margarita* 36, were still astern, and his fifth ship of the line, *Bellona* 74, as well as the *Indefatigable* had unfortunately just parted company.

But weakened as he was and though he had lost sight of the chase, he had no doubt what to do. As though he saw clearly into Dumanoir's mind he made straight east-north-east for Cape Ortegal. It was for that point also that Dumanoir was steering to get a departure, and possibly with the hope of slipping into Ferrol. But Strachan had cleverly cut him off. At daybreak on the 3rd, with his other frigate *Santa Margarita* added to the units in company, he had Ortegal in sight, and by nine o'clock the chase appeared again in the north-east. A couple of hours later the *Phoenix* and *Namur* were seen coming up, and behind them a stray frigate they had picked up. She proved to be the *Révolutionnaire* 38, a heavily armed cruiser, that went some way to make up for the loss of the *Bellona*. The force at his disposal thus amounted to four of the line and an equal number of what we should now call first-class cruisers, and here lies the main interest of the encounter. For the first time in anything that could be classed as a fleet action the fighting power of cruisers was about to be



SIR RICHARD STRACHAN'S ACTION.

From a plan attached to the Report of Rear-Admiral Dumanoir le 1
(Archives de la Marine BB⁴ 237). Desbrière's *Trafalgar*.

used directly to influence the issue, and that not in line with the battleships in the primitive style, but as a detachment with separate functions in accordance with the most recent ideas of our own time.

All day on the 3rd the weary chase went on towards Rochefort with the British slowly gaining, but when darkness fell the two fleets were still far apart. So fine was the night, however, that the chase was easily kept in sight, as it stood on in line of bearing, and when morning broke the *Cæsar* was barely six miles from the *Scipion*, the last of Dumanoir's four ships. Ahead of the British squadron and just within gunshot were the frigates that had been leading, and before six they had taken hold of the French rear. The power of heavy cruisers to stop a flying battle fleet was never better shown. In an hour or two the *Margarita* and *Phœnix* got near enough to keep yawing and giving the *Scipion* their broadsides. Dumanoir was still hoping to avoid an action. He had had to jettison a score of his eighty guns to keep his flagship afloat, and was in no condition to fight even an inferior force. But by eleven o'clock, finding it impossible to shake off the frigates with his stern-chasers, he was forced to haul to the wind in line of battle, and an action became inevitable.

Strachan still had but three of his squadron up, and in accordance with the then favourite plan he hailed his captains to say he meant to attack the rear. He himself led into action with his flagship, she being the most powerful vessel in the squadron. The most approved method of engaging for a fleet coming up from astern of an enemy in line of battle and from to windward was by inverting the line, that is, for the leading ship to engage the enemy's rearmost and her second astern to pass on under cover of her fire and take the next ahead, and so on. But this Strachan did not do, probably because Dumanoir was second in the French line, and he wanted to bring the two

flagships together. In any case he himself, like Nelson, led the line, engaging the two sternmost ships as he passed and hauling up abreast the French flagship. No attempt was made to break the line and engage from to leeward, as Nelson had laid down in his Memorandum of 1803, and this perhaps is explained by the interesting action of the cruisers. Instead of taking the orthodox position to windward of their own line and away from the enemy, they got into position on the lee and weather quarters of the rear-most ship and continued to engage her.

Strachan thus secured a concentration on the rear, and left the van ship, the *Duguay-Trouin*, out of action. Dumanoir promptly signalled to tack in succession, with the intention of covering his two rear ships and cutting off the *Namur*, which was now seen to be coming up. It was a bold move, for it had to be done under a destructive fire from the *Cæsar* and her second the *Héro*, and it brought the French down within pistol shot of the British line. And not only this. The other two heavy frigates had come up, and it brought them all four in line to leeward. Dumanoir was thus doubled on and deprived of the possibility of bearing up to get out of action. It was, therefore, unnecessary for Strachan to attempt the hazardous manœuvre of breaking the line in order to secure a decisive action, and indeed Dumanoir evinced no desire to avoid one.

The effect of the French move was that the two lines passed on opposite tacks. Then, instead of tacking again, Dumanoir held on to isolate the *Namur*, who was keeping her wind to weather them, and for more than half-an-hour the action ceased. Strachan was, of course, trying to get round. The obvious move was to tack, but his rigging was so badly injured that he was forced to wear. The result was confusion, and seeing the French were getting away and threatening to weather him he signalled to the *Namur*, as Nelson had done to the *Africa*, to bear up and engage the van. To

save time, as the *Hero* had got round first, he ordered her to lead, and formed a new line on her. In this formation the action was renewed with a fresh attack on the French rear, the frigates retaining their position astern and to leeward. At the same time the *Namur* came into line astern of the *Hero*, and the *Duguay-Trouin* being out of action, Strachan's four ships could concentrate on Dumanoir's other three. "The French squadron fought to admiration," wrote Strachan in his despatch, "and did not surrender till their ships were unmanageable," but by four o'clock the business was done and all had struck.

It was not till Strachan had the French Admiral on board that he discovered what he had done. "Judge of my surprise," he wrote, "when I found the ships we had taken were not the Rochefort squadron, but four from Cadiz." He had not been fighting *Allemand* after all, but a mere remnant that had escaped Nelson's hands. The elusive *Allemand* was, of course, far away, and to the end he maintained his reputation. The day before the battle of Trafalgar, finding no European port open to him, he had resolved to run for the Canaries. In a fortnight he was close to Teneriffe, where he learned from a Portuguese schooner fresh from Madeira that a British expedition, consisting of eight of the line, as many frigates, and 130 transports, had recently demanded shelter there and had been refused. It was, of course, Popham and Baird, whom he had so narrowly missed a few weeks before. They were said to be destined for a distant expedition, and were to take the Canaries on the way. If it were true, *Allemand* was in a terrible plight; but he decided to hold on in hopes the British squadron had passed forward, and that he would be able to retake the islands if he found a hostile garrison in occupation. On the morrow, the day Strachan and Dumanoir met, he made Teneriffe and cleared for action. But it was a false alarm. Baird and Popham had passed on

to the Cape of Good Hope without touching the Canaries, and Allemand was received with open arms by the Spanish Governor. Here he stayed for a fortnight to land his sick, revictual, and sell his prizes, which realised not far short of £20,000, and this, of course, was all over and above the value of the numerous less valuable captures he had sunk. But, as usual, the damage he had done to British trade cannot nearly have covered the cost of his expedition.

Still this indefatigable officer was far from regarding his campaign as finished. As yet he had not had a word of the Combined Fleet. He believed it was still blockaded in Cadiz, and he laid his plans accordingly. Having obtained three months' victuals and recruited his companies, he would cruise for a while about Madeira for the British colonial trade and reinforcements, and then would proceed off the coast of Portugal to sit on the communications of the squadron that was blockading Villeneuve. With this intention he sailed on November 19th. The very next day he sighted seven sail, which he believed to be one of the British squadrons in search of him. It was reported to be inferior, and he formed battle order and gave chase. In the night, however, the strangers eluded him. There was, in fact, no British squadron near him. The strangers were probably a convoy, and they must have had a narrow escape. Three days later, about Madeira, he captured a British West Coast vessel outward bound, and learned from her skipper that before leaving Portsmouth he had heard a great battle had been fought, in which Nelson had been killed, but he did not know the particulars. With no further captures Allemand passed on from his Madeira station, but it was not till the middle of December that he reached the coast of Portugal. Here on the 18th and 19th he took and sunk three British vessels, and from them he learned that there was a squadron about on the look-out for him, and that the Combined Fleet had been annihilated by Nelson and

Strachan. "The indiscretion," he says, "of those who brought me the news struck consternation aboard and aroused keen anxiety to get into port." At last the heart was beaten out of him and his squadron, and he resolved to seek shelter in Rochefort. One last stroke of luck still awaited him. It came with a westerly gale and thick weather that drove up at the right moment and carried him on at ten knots to the latitude of Rochefort, and there unseen he ran in in safety on Christmas Eve. So his brilliant Odyssey had ended. "On the 3rd (Nivôse)" he concluded his report, "I anchored in the Road of Aix Island after 161 days' absence, of which 148 were under sail, bringing back, with the squadron His Majesty entrusted to me, the enemy's ship of the line *Calcutta*. If, my lord, His Imperial and Royal Majesty and your Excellency condescend to approve the dispositions I made in the various difficult and embarrassing circumstances I met with, I shall feel highly recompensed for the pains I have taken to this end."¹

Oh si sic omnes! If Craig's expedition had not forced Napoleon's hand, if, as he first intended, he had been able to wait till winter loosened the blockades and had been able to split up his fleet into cruising squadrons under young officers of Allemand's stamp, what infinite trouble they might have caused to our colonial and commercial interests! But that at least Nelson's crushing victory had prevented. Pitt's offensive policy had undesignedly forced Napoleon to expose his fleet to annihilation, and all hope of effective action at sea was gone.²

¹ Desbrière, *Projets et Tentatives*, iv. 798-800.

² Allemand continued to disturb British strategy till the end. The Admiralty was specially anxious lest he should pick up the *Victory* and other ships crippled at Trafalgar as they made their way home.—*Barham Papers*, iii. 289-291.

CHAPTER XXVI

CONCLUSION

By universal assent Trafalgar is ranked as one of the decisive battles of the world, and yet of all the great victories there is not one which to all appearance was so barren of immediate result. It had brought to a triumphant conclusion one of the most masterly and complex sea campaigns in history, but in so far as it was an integral part of the combined campaign its results are scarcely to be discerned. It gave to England finally the dominion of the seas, but it left Napoleon dictator of the Continent. So incomprehensible was its apparent sterility that to fill the void a legend grew up that it saved England from invasion. That legend grew green till the present generation, unsupported as it was by the plain succession of events. Under the dry glare of modern historical methods the legend has withered, and in its place springs up the question, why was it that the consequences of Nelson's last achievement fell so far below his confident expectation, and why did Pitt die believing himself defeated?

The fault, it is certain, cannot be laid to his door. Not a moment had been lost in following up the blow. So soon as Napoleon's change of front was known, the War Office threw itself into bringing forward the disposable force for immediate action, and by the first week of October Castlereagh had settled the first step of the continental campaign. Bernadotte, in conformity with Napoleon's vast

movement, had withdrawn his corps from Hanover, and was *en route* to join the Grand Army for the invasion of Austria, leaving nothing behind him but a small garrison in Hameln, on the Weser, to secure a re-entry from Westphalia. The opportunity of driving the French from Northern Europe in Napoleon's absence was too promising to be resisted. A Russian force was on its way to join the Swedes at Stralsund, and Pitt decided that without waiting till the whole disposable British force could be mobilised, the king's German legion should sail at once to co-operate with the allies.¹ In view of the approach of winter and the closing of the northern seas with ice, the operation was extremely hazardous, but the risks were faced. To minimise them it was decided to send the expedition not to the Baltic, but to the Elbe, where from Cuxhaven and Stade it could rapidly join hands with the Swedes and Russians from Stralsund, at Lauenberg on the Weser. Accordingly Lord Keith was placed in direct communication with the War Office and ordered to get the troops across as quickly as possible, while Cornwallis covered the operation before Brest.

The Legion, with two British brigades which formed the advanced force under General Don, numbered about 11,000 men, and they were to be followed as soon as transport was ready by the rest of the disposable force, which Castlereagh hoped would eventually bring the whole up to sixty or seventy thousand.

It was not, of course, on this force alone that Pitt relied for success. The British expedition was only one element in a grand combined movement on Napoleon's left flank, and the backbone of the combination must be Prussia.

¹ This famous corps, which served under the British flag with so much distinction all over Europe till the end of the war, consisted mainly of Hanoverian troops who, rather than submit to the French under the Convention of Suhlingen (June 3, 1803), escaped to England and remained in the king's service. See Beamish, *History of the King's German Legion*.

Her attitude to the Coalition was still uncertain. At Berlin the War and the Peace parties were still at grips, and it was to stiffen and embolden her that Pitt had hastened the despatch of his first contingent. If Prussia could only be enheartened to take a hand it was calculated that in the spring, with the Swedes and Russians from Stralsund and various contingents from the minor German States, the combined army would reach a hundred thousand men. Such a force threatening Holland and the northern French frontier could not be neglected. It must at least act as a powerful diversion and cover an advance of the main Prussian army which it was proposed should move at once through Moravia against Napoleon's left. Such was the stroke which Pitt endeavoured to play—so it was he meant to use his command of the sea—on the well-tried lines his father had followed with so much success to save Frederick the Great. It is a bypath of the Austerlitz campaign that is now long forgotten. Yet it was nothing but the incalculable rapidity of Napoleon's heroic change of front that condemned it to failure and oblivion.

The incapacity and blindness with which the great soldier directed his naval campaign was only equalled by the astounding brilliance and certainty of touch with which ashore he snatched himself free from Pitt's toils. It was one of the many dramatic strokes of the campaign that on the day that Trafalgar was fought, as Nelson and Collingwood were contending in their snail's race to be first in the hour of reckoning, Napoleon was issuing from the camp of the Grand Army at Elchingen in Bavaria his famous Ninth Bulletin. It told how, two days before, General Mack, in accordance with Nelson's prophecy, had surrendered at Ulm with 30,000 men. The effect, taken together with that of the actions which led to it, was that the Austrian home army had almost ceased to exist. By a last stroke of irony it had happened just as Villeneuve was being driven out of

Cadiz by his master's ruthless treatment and there was no longer need for the fleet to be hazarded to almost certain destruction.

Staggering as was the blow which Napoleon had delivered, it by no means involved the end of the Coalition. It had been obtained only at the cost of sinning against a high strategical canon which condemns operations calculated to raise up fresh enemies. In order to outmanœuvre Mack Napoleon had violated Prussian territory, and the insult gave the War party at Berlin the upper hand of the vacillating king. Advances were made to the other Powers engaged, the nebulous threat on Napoleon's left flank began to materialise rapidly, and on November 3rd, as Strachan was in the heat of his chase after Dumanoir, the Treaty of Potsdam was signed. By its terms Prussia accepted the British proposals, and agreed that if within four weeks Napoleon did not accept her mediation she would join the Coalition with 180,000 men.

At last Pitt's great idea seemed to be realised, and Lord Harrowby, a member of the Cabinet, was hurried off to Berlin on a special mission to push things forward into action. There he arrived in the middle of November, just as the news of Trafalgar was flashing over Europe and as Don was landing in the Weser.¹ Harrowby carried full powers to arrange for a complete alliance, to define the common objects and to concert a plan of campaign. The main object was to secure prompt action, and Prussia, like Austria before her, was timidly bent on wasting time with an armed mediation. Harrowby was authorised to go even beyond what England had already offered. He was to promise a magnificent subsidy for all her troops and the command of the auxiliary army on the Weser if she

¹ Harrowby's first despatch from Berlin, and Don's first from Cuxhaven, are dated November 17th. See Rose, *Third Coalition*, p. 222, and *War Office* (1) *In-letters*, 186.

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would begin operations in Moravia at once. He was also empowered to deal with Sweden, Denmark, and certain of the Westphalian States, and to undertake that by the spring England would provide 70,000 men for use on the Continent or in maritime expeditions as the Allies desired. To mark England's disinterestedness he was to say that if the Coalition forced Napoleon to a general peace she was willing to give up without compensation all her conquests excepting only Malta and the Cape. Amongst the military experts consulted was Sir Arthur Wellesley, who had a brigade in the expeditionary force. He threw cold water on the whole plan—not for any inherent strategical defects—but because, with the same sure military insight that had prompted Nelson to protest against Mack, he was certain the Prussian army could not be mobilised in time to do any good.

The situation indeed was gone too far to leave much hope of saving it. If Napoleon's first blow had stirred up a hornet's nest on his left flank, on his right its effect had been all he could wish. In view of the threatening aspect of affairs in Italy he had been compelled to withdraw St. Cyr from the south and to use his corps to reinforce Masséna on the Adige. To Masséna had been committed the task of holding back the superior army of the Archduke Charles, whose mission was to drive the French out of Italy and put an end to Napoleon's new kingdom. Masséna's function was, in fact, defensive, but the moment he knew of Ulm he sprang forward and made a rough attack on the Austrian camp. The Archduke hurled him back, but seeing how desperate was the condition of Austria, it was impossible to follow up his success. All that it secured him was a safe retreat, and he rapidly fell back out of Italy to try to save the situation at home.

With that retreat all hope of effective action by Craig and the Russians was gone. It was on October 30th, the

day of Masséna's unsuccessful attack on the Archduke's camp, that Craig finally received his summons to meet the Russian expedition. Syracuse was to be the point of concentration. But so perverse was the weather that it was ten days before he even lost sight of Malta. Tired of waiting, the Russians passed on, and eventually the two expeditions concentrated off Cape Passaro, where a century and a half before the elder Byng had struck one of the many blows which England had delivered to save Sicily from falling into the hands of a first-class naval power.

Craig had brought his force up to 8000 men, but the promised Russian reinforcement from the Black Sea had not arrived, and all told the combined force numbered not more than 20,000. As the King of Naples had just broken down under Napoleon's pressure, and had signed in despair a treaty of neutrality, there was some doubt as to what to do. The Russian envoy, however, had little difficulty in persuading the high-spirited Queen to denounce the treaty, and to join the Coalition, promising that the kingdom would be defended. Elliot always said he opposed so flagrant a breach of faith, and believed no good could come of it. He was certainly no party to the arrangement, but under it both the Russian and British troops were invited to land. It was not till November 20th they anchored in Naples Bay, and then it was only to hear the staggering news of Mack's capitulation and the Archduke's retreat.¹

What was to be done? To Craig at least it was obvious that the French could return whenever they liked, and invade the Neapolitan dominions in such strength as it would be impossible for the local forces and their allies to resist. Elliot was of Craig's opinion that any further attempt to defend Naples could only end in disaster. His

¹ Craig to Castlereagh, November 2nd and December 9th: *War Office* (1), 280.

diplomacy, he knew, was powerless in face of the Russian ascendancy, but he trusted that the British General's influence over General Lacy was such that the British view would prevail.¹ But even if it did, the difficulties of the situation were far from solved. Simply to re-embark the troops was to leave the unhappy Queen to the extremity of Napoleon's vengeance which their reception would have earned her. True, there was a valid and urgent excuse for a re-embarkation. A message had come from the Archduke begging that the expeditionary force should be brought to Venice to act on Masséna's rear and stop his pursuit; but this was equally out of the question. Not only was the operation beyond the strength available, it was also too late, and was certainly beyond Craig's instructions. The two Generals agreed, therefore, to go into cantonments and collect transport and horses for their cavalry and guns, and to watch developments till further orders.

They had not long to wait. The situation indeed had been developing with rapidity. On November 3rd, the same day that the Treaty of Potsdam brought Prussia into the Coalition, Castlereagh issued final orders for the whole disposable force of the kingdom to prepare for foreign service. By the end of the four weeks on which Prussia insisted for her armed mediation all would be ready, but things were not going quite smoothly. Prussia was showing herself difficult about the ultimate settlement to be achieved. Hanover was her Naboth's vineyard, and amongst other things she wanted England to agree to its cession in exchange for Frisia and part of Westphalia. This proposal, however, the Cabinet refused even to communicate to the king. As for the mediation it mattered little. It was now understood to be nothing but a dilatory device to gain time for mobilisation. Before the end of

¹ Elliot to Mulgrave, Dec. 10th: Auriol, ii. 693. Napoleon to Prince Eugène, and Berthier to St. Cyr: *Ibid.*, pp. 704-5.

November, Pitt had not only seen the full terms of the treaty, but Harrowby had also received a comprehensive plan of campaign from the German Staff which was all that could be desired, and fitted nicely with the ideas of the British Cabinet. England was specially to charge herself with securing the mouths of the Elbe, Weser, and Emms, which would be the lines of supply for the Combined Army of the North, and to further as much as possible the flow of stores from Russia to the King of Prussia's magazines. Since the overthrow of Napoleon's fleet it was a duty which presented no difficulties. As for the operations of the Allies ashore the general plan of campaign was based in full accordance with the traditions of the elder Pitt's time on defensive action upon the Emms and Weser to cover the main operations till events justified something more drastic. All was going well except for the Swedes, who refused to advance till Prussia had committed herself by an act of war. Operations were amicably concerted between the Duke of Brunswick, who was commanding in chief, Tolstoi, who commanded the Russian contingent, and Blücher, who was Chief of the Staff in a Prussian corps commanded by the Grand Duke of Hesse. Hameln was already invested by Tolstoi and Don; and Lord Cathcart, with the main body of the British expeditionary force, was at Yarmouth only waiting for a wind.¹

Clearly, then, Napoleon's position was one that could not be maintained for long, and certainly not over the winter. Some of the remnants of Mack's army had succeeded in joining the Prussians, while others had escaped through the Tyrol and come down in rear of Masséna. At all costs, then, another blow must be dealt, and Napoleon, in spite of

¹ Details of the whole episode are to be found in the despatches of Don, of Brigadier Decken (chief intelligence officer with Don), and of Lord Cathcart, the British Commander-in-chief, all in *War Office* (1) *In-letters*, 186. Castlereagh's are in *Ibid.* (6), *Out-letters* (*Secretary of State*), 13, and in his *Correspondence, Second Series*, vol. ii. Harrowby's are in Rose, *Third Coalition*.

the danger that was brewing on his left rear, staked everything on a rapid forward movement to meet the advancing Russians still further from his base. His rapidity and daring were triumphant. At Austerlitz, on December 2nd, the fatal blow was delivered, and Pitt's grand fabric was in ruins. Though at first the truth was not realised, the Third Coalition had ceased to exist.

The respite on which Prussia insisted had just expired, but instead of keeping her word and immediately taking advantage of the desperate position into which Napoleon had pushed himself, she began to weaken at once. Harrowby, fearing the worst, had to warn Don not to commit himself too far. He was then at Verden on the Weser, and so sure had seemed the position that he had recently ordered the empty transports to return for further duty. Now he had to recall them in view of a retreat, and he himself had to stand fast as he was. This was the situation which greeted Cathcart, when on December 15th he reached Cuxhaven, and which staggered the anxious Generals in their cantonments at Naples.

Elliot was in despair. The day after the news of Austerlitz reached the Neapolitan Court, he sent home a hopeless despatch reviewing the situation. The misfortunes and blunders of the Austrian Generals, he said, had in their fatal consequences passed all calculation. In the interval between the embarkation of the troops at Corfu and Malta and their arrival at Naples, the formidable power of the Austrian monarchy had melted away. "I am tempted," he wrote, "to say with Shakspeare, 'It has vanished like the baseless fabric of a dream.'" Vienna, the Tyrol, and Venetia were in the hands of the enemy, and the Archduke Charles, who had the only Austrian army still in existence, was said to be retiring into Hungary. There were even rumours that a French army was already in movement for Naples.¹

¹ Elliot to Mulgrave, December 10th: Printed by Auriol, ii. 698.

It was not quite true, but true enough. The day before Elliot wrote Napoleon had informed Prince Eugène, his viceroy in Italy, who was getting nervous, that he was about to send back St. Cyr with 5000 men. But it was not so easy to find the troops. An armistice with the Austrians had been signed and negotiations for peace were commencing, but Vienna was showing an unexpectedly stiff front. Talleyrand had strict orders to keep Naples out of the treaty, but Napoleon was doubtful whether he would be able to insist on its annexation. The Archduke was in Hungary, drawing near to Vienna, and it was found necessary to absorb Masséna's corps into the Grand Army. Clearly Austerlitz had not finished the business unless Prussia could be frightened out of the path on which she had set her timid foot. To this end Napoleon was exerting the whole force of his personality, and by the middle of the month it was done. Haugwitz, the Prussian envoy, suddenly collapsed, and on December 15th set his hand to an abject desertion of the allies. Still the end was not yet. The king refused to ratify what Haugwitz had done, and Austria was still holding out.

Meanwhile British troops were still pouring across the North Sea. Including the recruits that had flocked to the German Legion, Cathcart had some 25,000 men and was already stretching forward to the Emms with intent to seize Holland while it was still denuded of French troops.¹ But a despatch from Harrowby announcing that the armistice which followed Austerlitz had been signed, brought all to a standstill. Russia, it is true, had been no party to it, but the Czar was on his way back to St. Petersburg, and Prussia was begging that no offensive movement should be made. Our arrangement with her

¹ A return, dated January 1806, gives the whole force as 27,000, of which the German Legion were 11,000. There were five British brigades under Dundas, Fraser, Wellesley, Shirbrook, and Hill.—*W. O.* (1), 186, January 2nd and 14th.

the danger that was brewing on his left rear, staked everything on a rapid forward movement to meet the advancing Russians still further from his base. His rapidity and daring were triumphant. At Austerlitz, on December 2nd, the fatal blow was delivered, and Pitt's grand fabric was in ruins. Though at first the truth was not realised, the Third Coalition had ceased to exist.

The respite on which Prussia insisted had just expired, but instead of keeping her word and immediately taking advantage of the desperate position into which Napoleon had pushed himself, she began to weaken at once. Harrowby, fearing the worst, had to warn Don not to commit himself too far. He was then at Verden on the Weser, and so sure had seemed the position that he had recently ordered the empty transports to return for further duty. Now he had to recall them in view of a retreat, and he himself had to stand fast as he was. This was the situation which greeted Cathcart, when on December 15th he reached Cuxhaven, and which staggered the anxious Generals in their cantonments at Naples.

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had provided for Cathcart's retreat in case of need into Prussian territory. No promise had yet been given, and clearly she was no longer to be trusted without one. Leaving his troops where they were, Cathcart at once went up the Weser to Nienberg to hold a conference with Tolstoi.

The Russian General had been given to understand that his master had hope of continuing the war in concert with Prussia in the spring; but for the present it was agreed there must be a general falling back to a defensive position. The investment of Hameln was raised, Cathcart stopped all the last arrived transports, recalled his advanced posts from the Emms, and began to concentrate on the lower Weser round Bremen. Still he had no thought of abandoning his loyal Russian allies without express orders from home. To complete his position he prepared to seize Bremen, as the best means of securing his retreat and of defending himself if the ice should shut him in.¹ There was indeed little hope of a successful issue, and he warned the Government not to send on the third division of his force, which, after sailing, had been driven back by a gale with some loss. It was inexpedient, he thought, in the circumstances, to lock up more of the disposable force in North Germany. But the transports were already at sea, and things were going from bad to worse. They had sailed again on December 22nd, and next day all was over. Prussia had given in; Austria had agreed to terms of peace; and the main Russian army was sullenly retiring.

It was at Naples that the reaction was first felt. On the morrow of the preliminaries of peace being agreed, St. Cyr received orders to march. On the 25th the Peace

¹ Cathcart to Castlereagh, December 25th (enclosing Harrowby to Cathcart, December 20th), and Cathcart to Castlereagh, January 1st: *W. Q.* (1), 176.

of Presburg was signed between France and Austria, and without waiting a day Napoleon issued a bulletin to his army announcing that the Bourbon dynasty at Naples, for its crimes and treason, had ceased to exist. By the end of the month the Emperor's brother Joseph had received orders to reign in his stead, and Masséna had been sent down to command the army that was to put him on the throne.

At the urgent entreaty of the doomed Queen, Lacy and his staff were engaged in a reconnaissance of the Neapolitan frontier to see if resistance were in any way possible before giving in to Craig's views. On January 3rd he was back, and a full council of war was held for a final decision. Lacy was there with three of his staff, and Craig with Stuart his second in command, and Campbell his second brigadier, as well as the Russian Commadore Greig and Captain Sotheron of the *Excellent*, whose year-long vigil was still unended. The unanimous decision was that with the force available the frontier was indefensible. As to the alternative, there was a difference of opinion. The question was whether any part of the kingdom could be held or whether the allied forces should re-embark. The Russians were decidedly in favour of abandoning the capital and retiring the whole of the troops—Russians, British, and Neapolitan, into Calabria, which they were convinced could be retained. They were supported by Stuart and Bunbury against the British commander-in-chief. Craig took a different view. His instructions enjoined that whatever he could or could not do, he was to make sure of Sicily. So soon as it was in danger he was to occupy Messina, if possible by consent of the King; if not, then without it. Since neither he nor Elliot had been any party to the recent convention by which Russia had undertaken the defence of Naples, they did not regard the British honour pledged

like that of the Russians. Nevertheless Craig, as a soldier, did feel bound to Lacy, just as Cathcart did to Tolstoi. His position was extremely difficult. He was firmly of opinion that, under his instructions, the hour had come to secure Sicily, that he ought at once to place Messina beyond Napoleon's reach, but, at the same time, he could not permit his view to carry him so far as to decline to be bound by the decision of the majority. Accordingly he entered a separate written opinion, in which he pronounced strongly against the idea of holding Calabria, as a measure that could do no good either to Naples or the common cause. Nevertheless, he said he considered himself bound in honour not to desert his Russian colleague, and solely on that consideration he consented to share the risks and dangers which, in his eyes, the proposed operation promised.¹

The decision was immediately conveyed to the Court. They were in despair, but worse was yet to come. Into the midst of their distracted protests broke an aide-de-camp of the Czar. He had come in hot haste from Austerlitz, and he handed Lacy a peremptory order to evacuate Italy.² On a smaller scale it was a betrayal as barefaced as that of which Prussia had been guilty. Its sole and sufficient excuse was hard necessity. Craig's conscience at least was clear, his hands were free, and he hesitated no longer to carry out his plain instructions. His troops were marched down again to their landing-place at Castellamare, while the Russians returned to Baia. In vain the Court entreated for a delay while they attempted to avert Napoleon's

¹ Auriol, ii. 745: *Protocol of the Council of War*.

² Elliot to Mulgrave, January 13th (Auriol, ii. 778). The reason for this order does not seem to be known, but it may be not unconnected with the armistice and the fact that the remnants of the Russian army were permitted to retire without further molestation. Tolstoi appears to have told Cathcart the idea of Lacy's recall was to concentrate in Poland for an expected campaign in concert with Prussia. Cathcart to Castlereagh, December 25th: *W. O.* (1), 186.

vengeance through the Pope. It was a hopeless expedient. Mercy was as much out of the question as resistance, and after a few days' hesitation the Russians returned to Corfu, and Craig on January 20th anchored his force before Messina.

On the North Sea the same unhappy scene was being enacted. As Craig marched down to Castellamare news reached London that Prussia was certainly intending to desert the Coalition, and to make the best terms she could for herself. To complete the general perplexity, Pitt was on his death-bed, stricken down by the shock of Austerlitz. He had just come back from Bath, worse rather than better for the change, and was in no condition to transact business. But the crisis was acute. The troops had been sent in the first instance mainly in the hope of stiffening Prussia's attitude to Napoleon, and she was obviously becoming again like wax in his hands. The Ministers had to face the possibility that at any moment she might accept the bribe of Hanover and declare for Napoleon. In that case half of our whole disposal force, which was now with Cathcart, would be in serious jeopardy. On January 3rd he had occupied Bremen, and had concentrated everything in its immediate neighbourhood. But with Prussia hostile the position was scarcely tenable, even with the rivers open. It was obvious that Cathcart must be either reinforced or withdrawn at once before winter locked him in.

Still to reverse Pitt's policy, as he lay helpless, was more than the Ministers had the heart to do without his consent. Castlereagh and Hawkesbury therefore took the responsibility of going to his bedside. The interview was the last blow. Till then there had been fair hope of recovery, but on the morrow it was obvious he was dying. It was the last piece of business he did for his country, and to the end he strove against the wreck of his heroic policy. The last shred of hope must be clung to. Orders went out

to General Cathcart not to withdraw at once, but that he was to hold himself in readiness to re-embark the whole force the moment he got the word from Berlin. He had not long to wait. A despatch from Lord Harrowby almost immediately quenched even the last spark of hope; and as Craig was anchoring at Messina definite and urgent orders went off to Cathcart to re-embark forthwith, and to Keith to cover the retirement.

So fell the last fragment of all the dying Minister had hoped of his great Coalition. If the British position were to be secured it must be done single-handed. Pitt's wisdom had foreseen it, and provided the means in the two little forces of Craig and Baird. They still remained to close the chapter with a welcome gleam of success.

With Craig's transports before Messina, Sicily was safe. He could secure his point at any moment, and was content to hold his hand till the consent of the Neapolitan Court to an occupation was obtained, or till need arose to act without it. His action was not stayed for long. Three days after he arrived, as London was hushed in its waking with the news that Pitt was dead, the *Excellent* was weighing anchor; St. Cyr was in motion; the hour for which Nelson more than a year before had bidden her stand-by had come, and the King was on board. He landed at Palermo, where Acton was waiting for him, and with his old adviser at his side there was little doubt how things would go for Craig. The *Excellent* went back for the Queen, and she too sought the refuge Nelson had provided. A day or two later she was with the King again, and all was settled. An invitation came at once for Craig to land, and on February 16th Messina was occupied.

It was the last stroke of the Trafalgar campaign—and fitly so; for it was the central point around which it had turned. Little as seemed the gain in the midst of the vast continental struggle, it was enough; and Napoleon knew it,

as was quickly confessed, although for a while he believed that the removal of Pitt's firm hand from the helm would enable him to do with England what he would.

The tragic death of the great War Minister forced on the King a change of Government. Amidst the ruins of the Coalition he had no choice but to place himself in the hands of the Opposition. With the rest of the old servants who had shaped the campaign went Barham. Without honour or recognition the great sailor, who had handled the fleet with a mastery never equalled since Anson's days, retired into the obscurity from which Pitt had called him in the hour of need. Not a word can be found to show that the country recognised in the least the perfection of his work. His rigid determination to permit none of the old evil influences to prejudice the efficiency of the machine with which Pitt had entrusted him; his ruthless attitude to family influence and his sparing reward for plain duty done had set against him those who make reputations—the self-seekers in society and the service. “The present Admiralty, I hear,” wrote the wife of Cornwallis's Captain of the Fleet, “are making their arrangements of *congé*. . . . In no case do I believe they would have remained in, for the cry is violent among the Navy against them, and they have really treated Baker, Sir Richard Strachan, and others like delinquents, Lord Barham, as I hear, holding the language ‘that it was his duty to make other people do theirs, because it was their duty.’ This sounds *very fine, magnificent*, and let us add nonsensical. . . . Lord Townshend wrote to Lord Barham to ask him to make him (Lord James Townshend) a lieutenant. What would you say if I assert that this was refused? When you consider Lord Townshend's services, his respectability, is it not incredible? Lady Townshend is very indignant, but likewise hurt to death about it!”¹ Trivial as is the letter, it

¹ Mrs. Nugent to Cornwallis, Jan. 23, 1806: *Hist. MSS. Com., Various Collections*, vi. 417.

secured the British Empire. Beside the vital outpost in Sicily he had won another as valuable in the south. By the middle of January Baird was in full possession of the Cape. These two positions were the solid return of the unmatched work which Pitt's Admirals had performed at sea, and together they rendered the Empire impregnable.

That and no less was what the campaign of Trafalgar achieved. It was not merely that it secured the British Isles from invasion. The ramparts it built stretched to the ends of the earth. It was not merely that it destroyed the French naval power. By securing bases in the Mediterranean and towards the East, it made it impossible for any partial revival of Napoleon's navy to place any part of our oversea possessions in serious jeopardy. Against any other man than Napoleon, with any other ally than Prussia as she then was, it might well have done much more. As it was, the sea had done all that the sea could do, and for Europe the end was failure.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

PITT'S INSTRUCTIONS TO LORD G. LEVESON-GOWER

[*Foreign Office. Russia. 58.*]

DOWNING STREET, June 7, 1805.

MY LORD,—In addition to the contents of my Dispatch No. 15 of this date, in which I treat of the proposal that His Majesty should consent without reserve to an offer to be made, in the last resort, to Bonaparte by Monsieur de Novossilzoff of the evacuation of Malta, as a condition of the immediate adoption of the arrangements proposed in the Treaty signed on the 11th of April at St. Petersburg, it appears expedient, at this crisis, that, in order to place in their true light the great and extensive sacrifices already consented to by the King, I should declare more at large to your Excellency the sense which His Majesty entertains of the comparative situation of Great Britain and of the nations on the Continent of Europe, with respect to the power and views of France, lest those liberal sacrifices which are the result of a great and comprehensive view of general Policy, should be misconceived as the effect of impending danger or of anxious apprehension. It cannot, however, have escaped the observation of the Cabinet of St. Petersburg that, whilst the energies of the Continental Powers are held in suspense between the danger of submission and the apprehended consequences of opposing resistance to the uninterrupted course of insults or encroachment on the part of France, Great Britain has disproved the vainglorious boast of the French Government by a contest maintained, with advantage, single-handed.

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Navy within the range of the protecting batteries which line the enemy's coast, and valuable Colonies have been conquered from France and her Dependent Allies. During this period of successful events, the Naval and Military force of Great Britain have progressively increased, and the financial resources of the country have continued unimpaired.

But notwithstanding the means which His Majesty has proved that he possessed of providing for the immediate security of his own Dominions, he has never lost sight of the policy by which their permanent interests are connected with those of the Continent. On this principle His Majesty has declined entering into any negotiation with France except in concert with other Powers, and especially with the Emperor of Russia. On the same principle he has offered great and extensive sacrifices for the purpose of obtaining, if possible by Treaty, a general arrangement for the security of Europe, and, in the other alternative, the most liberal co-operation towards the vigorous prosecution of a Continental war. His Majesty in proposing these extensive sacrifices for stipulated conditions of general security, in undertaking to provide such ample contributions for the support of war, if that alternative should be resorted to for the general advantage, stated at the same time the degree of security which he deemed essential, and the outline of the provisions by which alone it appeared to His Majesty such security could be ensured to the different States of Europe. The King observes, with the highest satisfaction, that, in the event of war being found to be the only course by which a state of security to Europe can be established and preserved, the views of the Emperor of Russia are in perfect conformity to those of His Majesty. But, in estimating the conditions proper to be offered to Bonaparte with the intent to avert the calamities of War by proposing the most moderate provisions for the future Safety and Independence of the Powers of the Continent, His Majesty observes, with regret, that the modifications introduced into the Treaty, as signed by your Excellency, fall, in many essential points, far short of the stipulations stated as necessary in His Majesty's original proposal.

In Italy the intended arrangement by no means gives effect to the principle, the importance of which is recognized in the 10th

Separate Article of the Treaty, that the frontiers of France should, on one side, be confined within the Alps; for it cannot be contended that, in effect (whatever may be expressed in terms) France will be confined within the Alps, if a sovereign of the family of Bonaparte should be established in Piedmont. The uninterrupted influence of France over the councils and conduct of Spain from the period of the accession of the Duke of Anjou to the throne of the latter kingdom, affords a sufficient example of the consequences which must inevitably follow from the proposed distribution of the North of Italy, connecting, as it will, France and Lombardy under the Government of the family of Bonaparte. The sovereignty in that case provided for the King of Sardinia would not, either in strength of frontier, in extent of territory, or in the amount of its revenue or population, be capable of maintaining a state of independence against France, even with every support which might reasonably be hoped for from Austria, though the latter Power should be put in possession of Mantua, which however is not made an absolute condition under the terms of the Treaty.

On the side of Holland and the North of Germany the provisions for security and independence are not more solid. Although the establishment of a powerful state in that quarter is specified as the surest mode of providing for the security of the United Provinces, such an arrangement is relinquished as hopeless. In the present instance, the additional Barrier proposed for Holland, inadequate as it is, is not to be insisted upon, and even the ancient line of their territory is not positively stipulated. It is evident upon this cursory statement of the inadequacy of the modified terms which compose the conditions of the Treaty as signed by your Excellency, that the view with which His Majesty proffered the sacrifice of all his conquests made during the present War has not been adhered to. Yet His Majesty is fully sensible of the benefits which may be derived from any improvement of the present state of Europe, and from any arrangement of territory which may afford some additional means of resistance, especially if this improvement is accompanied by that confidence which is the result of successful opposition to encroaching ambition, and which may lead to future exertion, if increased means of such future

exertion are held forth ; and above all by a system of co-operation and concert among the leading Powers. His Majesty therefore, however disappointed in the expectation of a more adequate provision for the immediate and effectual security of Europe, is ready, on his part, to agree to the modifications proposed by His Imperial Majesty. The Treaty has accordingly been ratified with the exception of that part of the 10th Separate Article which relates to the evacuation of Malta by His Majesty's troops ; and with certain verbal alterations in the same Article, where the expression of sentiments attributed to the King, is carried somewhat beyond the real opinion and feelings of His Majesty. These alterations however in no degree affect either the principles or the object of the Concert. There is also an alteration in the 7th Separate Article which becomes necessary in consequence of the terms on which His Majesty has expressed his readiness to admit of a substitute for Malta in the Mediterranean.

Having stated to your Excellency the view which His Majesty has of the probable degree of efficacy of the conditions provided by the Treaty, if they should be accepted by Bonaparte, I trust your Excellency will be able to convince the Russian Cabinet that, the evacuation of Malta by Great Britain under such a state of things, would not be consistent with the future security and permanent tranquillity of Europe. If the continent should be left (as stated above) open to the future aggressions of Bonaparte, and that the restraint on the naval operations of France in the Mediterranean should be removed by the surrender of the British Establishment in that sea ; the coasts of Italy, Turkey, Greece, and Egypt would be exposed to the unrestricted enterprizes of the common enemy ; and would soon be subject to his absolute control.

It would exceed the limits of a dispatch to state (and would indeed be superfluous and unnecessary to your Excellency, who are so well informed of them) the long course of historical events, in which the protecting influence of the British Navy in the Mediterranean has been exerted for the advantage of Europe. It is however essential to draw your Excellency's attention to the particular circumstances which, at the present time, render a British station in that quarter of peculiar importance. To prove this position it is sufficient to observe the earnest and unremitting

exertions of the French Government to secure to itself the command of every port in the Mediterranean. Already in possession of Toulon, of Corsica, and of many of the ports of Italy, and with an entire influence over the ports of Spain, Bonaparte has arbitrarily annexed to France the Island of Elba, and, if he had succeeded in the attempt which he made subsequent to the Treaty of Amiens to place Malta in the hands of the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem, deprived as they were even of the benefits of the provisions of that Treaty, and of all means of maintaining their independence, he might again, at pleasure, have either purchased or seized that Island, and have thereby secured the absolute control of Sicily and Naples, and the means of effecting his designs against the Ottoman territories. In the absence of a British fleet, what power could check the progress of French ambition to these ends? Would Malta, in the hands of Russia, operate that check, without a British fleet? No; but it may be said that Malta, with the flag of Russia flying on its ramparts, would still afford that salutary station to the British fleet. That question certainly forms a part of the discussion of this great subject, and merits consideration.

The just and enlightened views of the present Sovereign of Russia neither are nor can be doubted, and create a perfect reliance on the present system of Russia; but, in forming a final arrangement, it is necessary to secure permanence to the system on which that arrangement depends—past experience gives no assurance of that security. I am unwilling to recall the painful recollection of the moment at which Russia was on the point of exerting, in conjunction with France, all the powerful means of that great Empire. Had such a Confederacy been actually established and brought into action, and the fleets of Great Britain at the same time excluded from the Mediterranean, all the calamities which still threaten to overwhelm Europe, unless prevented by resistance, would, in that case, have been at once effected and irretrievably confirmed. The danger which then existed may, by possibility, again recur, if the same disposition should, in any future reign, misguide the policy, and misapply the powerful influence of the Russian Empire. But without looking forward to possible contingencies, which it is painful to contemplate, your

Excellency will perceive that, even under the present system, so congenial to the character and disposition of the reigning Emperor, the continuance or renewal of the weakness and apathy of the other Powers of Europe, might again necessarily prevent the Emperor of Russia from taking an active part in any future war between England and France; in which case Malta would become a neutral port, open indeed to the commerce of both belligerents, but receiving only a limited number of the ships of war of either nation; a circumstance indifferent to France, with the possession of ample and convenient ports, but capable of operating, under certain situations of Italy and the other maritime stations within the Mediterranean, as an absolute prohibition on any naval operations by Great Britain in those seas.

The wise and generous policy of the Emperor of Russia has led him to feel, in common with the King, the importance of supporting the Ottoman Empire. With this general object equally in view, Great Britain and Russia have obviously a more near and pressing interest in distinct and different parts of the possessions of the Porte, and they are respectively, at this time, in possession of the stations, which can afford the most immediate and effectual support to the quarter most essentially interesting to each. Corfu is at once the bulwark and key of Greece, as Malta is of Egypt; but as the latter would not be equally effectual to that object in the hands of Russia, neither could it be expected, if the Ottoman Dominions should be threatened and endangered by France, that Russia would divert her attention from the object more immediately interesting to itself, to provide for the security of that which is more particularly and pointedly connected with the interests of Great Britain. It will also be remembered that, by the Treaties which have been concluded with the Porte, the assistance of a British fleet has been deemed indispensably necessary for the security of the Turkish Dominions. This aid His Majesty cannot effectually afford without the possession of Malta, and the command which it gives in those Seas. Russia cannot keep up a garrison in Malta and supply the place without infinite difficulty and expense, especially if there be not a superior Russian fleet in the Mediterranean, for, without that protection, the supply from Sicily

might, at the pleasure of France, be cut off, and even the Island itself might consequently be reduced by famine; or perhaps the vicinity of France might even afford the opportunity of besieging its extensive fortifications with so superior a force as to preclude an effectual resistance during the long period which must elapse before the arrival of reinforcements.

It must also be recollected that the active intrigues of France might prevail upon the Porte suddenly to prohibit the passage of the Dardanelles, for the purpose of preventing either naval or military reinforcement, or, if intrigue should prove ineffectual, the fleets of France, triumphant in those seas, might shut the passage by force. If such would be the ineffectual and precarious possession of Malta by Russia, it seems to be for the general interest of all the Powers of Europe, but more especially of Russia, that the Island should not be separated from His Majesty's Dominions, by exchanging it for any other naval station in the Mediterranean. Before I quit this part of the subject, it is necessary that I should observe upon an argument which has been dwelt upon as being of considerable weight in discussing the question of the evacuation of that Island. It has been said that Great Britain having once consented to evacuate Malta on the condition of being secured against the repossession of it by France, His Majesty cannot, at this time, be justified in insisting upon the retention of that place. In this mode of reasoning a variety of answers immediately present themselves. It is a received and undisputed principle that a state of war not only puts an end to the absolute provisions of all existing treaties, but, of course, also to all conditional concessions, which, under particular circumstances previous to the existence of war, might have been deemed expedient or admissible. In the present case it is further to be observed that the unconditional and unrequited evacuation of Malta is now proposed; whereas, at the period alluded to, other stipulations favourable to Great Britain attended the condition annexed to Malta—important Colonies were retained and confirmed to her by treaty as the price of peace, and engagements entered into by France for the independence of different States in Europe. Subsequent to the conclusion of peace, great encroachments had been made by the French Government, and

some of the very countries which, according to the terms to be now proposed under the 10th separate Article of the Treaty would remain in possession of France, were annexed to that Republic, subsequent to the provisions made with respect to Malta at the Treaty of Amiens. Piedmont has since that period been incorporated into France; Elba has been seized and appropriated to the French Republic; the stipulated independence of Holland has been violated by arbitrary changes of its form of Government, and by the despotic control exercised over the commerce and resources of that country; Switzerland, instead of enjoying the covenanted choice of its own form of Government and the independence of its national existence, has been controlled, degraded, and oppressed. The Kingdom of Naples has been menaced and invaded; and in one word, every condition has been violated, which appeared at that time to afford a semblance of security to Europe. It is obvious, upon these grounds, that His Majesty cannot be called upon, in point of consistency or justice, to recur to stipulations which were provided under a state of things in every respect distinct and different from the present, and which have been rendered impracticable by the subsequent conduct of the French Government.

Impressed as His Majesty is with all these powerful considerations, nothing could now induce him to entertain in any shape, or on any conditions, the idea of relinquishing this possession, but an extreme desire to meet, if possible, the wishes of the Emperor of Russia, and to show his anxiety to facilitate, as much as possible, any general and solid arrangement for the security and interests of Europe.

But in no case, can it be consistent with those very interests (independent of those of Great Britain), even if any circumstances should render the evacuation of Malta admissible, that His Majesty should be left without some secure and adequate station in the Mediterranean.

The result, therefore, of what I am to state to your Excellency by His Majesty's command is, First, That it is impossible for His Majesty to consent to relinquish the possession of Malta in return for such inadequate provisions for the security of the Continent as those arising out of the modifications proposed to be admitted

by the 10th Article; and, Secondly, that however favourable might be the conditions obtained for the Continent, he could in no case listen to such an arrangement without obtaining in exchange for Malta some Naval Station in the Mediterranean, which, though in many respects inferior, might afford a competent security against the attack of an enemy, and be in its nature and position effectual to some of the principal naval objects of Great Britain in that quarter.

The condition on which His Majesty would be induced to consent to such an arrangement can only be that of more effectual provisions being concluded for the general security of Europe—and more particularly for that part of it in which the interests of Great Britain are most immediately involved—by the establishment of a firm and solid Barrier for the protection of The United Provinces.

The following conditions, in His Majesty's view of the necessary measures to be pursued, ought to be insisted upon:—

First : The absolute re-establishment of the King of Sardinia in Piedmont, with such a line of defence in the Alps as may be deemed sufficient for the security of his dominions.

Second : The present and permanent independence of Switzerland, secured by the uninfluenced choice of its own form of Government, and by the undisturbed construction of the fortresses necessary for the perfect security of its territory, as stated in the 10th separate Article.

Third : A substantial Barrier to Holland, and further effectual means for the future preservation of that country against the attempts of France, by the interposition and co-operation of some great Military Power interested in its defence. His Majesty, on the fullest consideration, is confirmed in the opinion that, in the present state of Europe, that essential object can be assigned to Prussia alone. But to induce and enable that Power to make effectual exertions for that important purpose, it will be necessary to give to Prussia such a military line of frontier as shall connect advantageously with that of Holland, together with such an acquisition of territory as shall amply supply the means of supporting the necessary charges of maintaining and defending that frontier.

The King entertains an earnest desire to conform his proposals for effecting this purpose, to the views entertained by the Emperor of Russia, in as much as may be consistent with the objects for which alone His Majesty would feel himself justified in admitting any exchange for Malta. His Majesty is disposed, therefore, to state the acquisitions to be assigned to Prussia considerably short of the extent of those originally suggested in the dispatch to Count Woronzow of the 19th of January, as expedient to be given in the event of Prussia becoming a party to the concert.

Although at that time the evacuation of Malta was not in discussion, and certainly not in the contemplation of His Majesty, Your Excellency will observe that the territory proposed as an inducement to Prussia to join in the concert consisted of the whole of the Netherlands (not within the line to be drawn from Antwerp to Maestricht) together with the whole of the Duchies of Luxembourg and Juliers, and the other territories between the Meuse and the Moselle; and further (if no insuperable objection should be stated) the whole of the country acquired by France on the left bank of the Rhine, eastward of the Moselle; but in consideration of that arrangement having been in contemplation, as the result of successful war, and that the present proposals are to be made with a view to prevent that extremity, the King is disposed to assent to the offer of lower terms, even for the evacuation of Malta, which His Majesty cannot, however, but consider as, on his part, giving an advantage; which could not otherwise be obtained by the enemy, except as the consequence of the most successful war. His Majesty, under the circumstances of the present moment, will be contented that the proposal to be made to France shall not exceed what, to His Majesty, appears the least which can afford either sufficient means, or sufficient temptation to induce Prussia to undertake, and effectually provide for, the safety of the United Provinces, and which was stated in the dispatch of the 19th of January, as the least that could afford security.

For this object, therefore, His Majesty would deem it an adequate arrangement if Prussia should be put in possession of the fortress of Luxembourg, together with such proportion of that Duchy as will form an effectual military line from thence to

Maestricht, with the fortress necessary to be constructed, and the whole of the country included within that line, the Meuse, the Moselle, and the Rhine; trusting, however, that any necessary increase for the sole and obvious purpose of rendering more effectual the military line of defence will not be objected to by His Imperial Majesty.

His Majesty is the more disposed to flatter himself that the Emperor will be inclined to acquiesce in this proposal as he perceives with pleasure, not only that the principle of securing the Barrier of Holland by the interposition of a Great Power is recognised by His Imperial Majesty; but that after stating in the first instance, the restoration of the former Prussian territories on the left of the Rhine, as a fit offer to be made to Prussia, it is proposed to make in certain cases an addition (the extent of which is not defined) to those territories, and to carry their limits to whatever frontier may ultimately be assigned to France in that quarter. His Majesty is indeed aware that this extension of territory is suggested only in the supposed event of successful war. But the same degree of security in this most essential quarter, which is meant in that case, to be obtained by war, His Majesty thinks himself reasonably and justly entitled to insist upon in the first instance as a condition of negotiation, in return for such an additional sacrifice of strength and security as he is now called upon to make with a view to pacific arrangement.

The King, however, on his part, is not disposed tenaciously to adhere to any precise view of this question which he may have adopted, though it has by no means changed since the original exposition of the subject in the dispatch above alluded to; but His Majesty will be well satisfied to give his consent to any different or more limited arrangement to which the King of Prussia would consent as sufficient to induce and enable him to undertake the protection and co-operate in the future defence of the United Provinces.

The security of Holland, the ancient and important ally of Great Britain, being so far provided for, and the different States of Italy being placed in a situation to repel the hostile attacks of France, the King will be satisfied to place after a time to be limited, the harbour of Malta under the protection of a Russian

garrison, due provision being at the same time made for the civil government of the Island, in a way satisfactory to the inhabitants, provided an arrangement can be made by which His Majesty shall be put in possession of the Island of Minorca as the substituted Naval Station for the fleets of Great Britain, although the relative security of that Island against invasion and capture, can bear no comparison with that of Malta. But His Majesty considering the advantages to Europe of the improved stipulations under which he engages to make such exchange, is satisfied in this, as in other instances, to relinquish considerations peculiar to himself, for the solid advantages to be procured for his allies; and for the better and more certain establishment of general and permanent tranquillity. With a view to compensate Spain for the transfer of Minorca His Majesty would be ready to concur in any reasonable arrangement which might be made in Italy for the benefit of the King of Etruria, and he trusts that, by the interposition of His Impl. Majesty the Court of Spain might without much difficulty be reconciled to this proposal. The period to be limited at the expiration of which this arrangement can take place, must not be less than three years; in order to afford His Majesty a reasonable time for completing such works as may be necessary for the defence of Minorca; and also to afford an opportunity of making a considerable progress in the essential work of strengthening the Barriers of Holland, Germany and Switzerland.

His Majesty thinks it necessary also expressly to declare, that, in agreeing to make this last sacrifice for the purpose of obtaining security for the Continent by negotiation rather than war, he can consider this offer as binding only in the event of a pacific arrangement, and that if the negotiation should not take place, or should not prove successful, it shall at no future time be made a claim, that this important possession shall again become matter of negotiation. Although the King has every reason to be convinced, that this disposition on his part to concur in the views of His Imperial Majesty, will be met in every respect with a corresponding sentiment on the part of the Emperor of Russia,—His Majesty has nevertheless especially commanded me to repeat to Your Excellency in this confidential dispatch, his firm determination not to concur in any proposal that can countenance the

INSTRUCTIONS TO LEVESON-GOWER 485

slightest expectation of a revision of the Maritime Code,—and to express His Majesty's confident hope, that His Imperial Majesty will not persevere in the idea of a measure, which however contrary to the intention of His Imperial Majesty, will nevertheless bear the appearance of a disposition unfavourable to the rights and interests of Great Britain, and which can lead to no practical result.

[*Endorsed.*].

DRAFT

TO LORD G. L. GOWER,

June 7th, 1805.

No. 16.

By the Messenger Elsworth.

APPENDIX B

FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS TO LORD G. LEVESON-GOWER

[*Foreign Office. Russia. 58.*]

DOWNING STREET, *July 1805.*

MY LORD,—The information received by a courier just arrived from Berlin is in some respects so decisive, and in every point of view so important, that I lose no time in addressing some observations to Your Excellency on the present state of affairs, and on the course which it may in consequence become expedient to adopt in conjunction with Russia. At the same time that His Majesty's Government learned that the arrogant usurpation by Buonaparte of the obvious objects of the proposed negotiation, had determined the Emperor of Russia to put an end to the mission of Monar. Novossilzoff, and that His Imperial Majesty had ordered the French passports to be returned into the hands of the Prussian Minister, information was also received that Prussia is decidedly averse to any exertion for its own independence, or for the deliverance of Europe, and that Austria, though more directly threatened, and more immediately in danger, has not manifested any disposition to accede to the proposed concert, or to enter into any more active alliance with Great Britain and Russia than that which she had contracted with the latter Power in the defensive Treaty concluded in November 1804.

This disposition of the two powers renders the stipulated force of 400,000 unattainable, and the general deliverance of Europe at the present period impracticable. The object and the means proposed by the concert concluded between His Majesty

and the Emperor of Russia being thus, for the time at least, frustrated, it becomes a subject of important deliberation to determine how far it may be practicable for Great Britain and Russia, without the assistance of Prussia or Austria, to check the progress of France in any particular quarter, or to afford security against her meditated attacks to any of those powers, which, having manifested a just sense of the conduct and views of the French Government, are thereby become the more immediate and particular objects of its enmity. Sweden and Naples are the States which obviously come under the above description, they are also respectively more or less open to the aggressions of France; Naples indeed is not merely threatened but already in part occupied by the troops of the French Republic. On the other hand also the line of Prussian guarantee has been so uniformly contracted as [the councils of French encroachment have been extended, that no reasonable expectation of security for Swedish Pomerania can be founded on the professed protection of the North of Germany by Prussia.

In considering therefore the expediency and probable effect of the employment of Russian troops, unsupported by Austria and Prussia, the points which first present themselves as important and as, upon the whole, most likely to be occupied with security and effect, are 1st the Kingdom of Naples and 2nd the tract of country in the North of Germany lying between the Elbe and the Baltic. The importance of security to those points, if attainable, will be immediately obvious to Your Excellency. The occupation of the Kingdom of Naples (especially if a sufficient army should be collected to clear it of St. Cyr's army, and to establish the line of defence in the Province of Abruzzo) must be productive of considerable advantage to the common cause. A force so stationed would in the first place afford the most effectual check to any projects which Buonaparte may entertain on the side of Greece; the deliverance of Naples would manifest to the Ottoman Porte, and to all the powers of the second order, that a steady adherence to the good cause will be followed by powerful exertions and efficient measures of protection and defence on the part of Great Britain and Russia. The entire security of the Kingdom of Naples by the vigorous defence of an extensive

frontier, might also (it is to be hoped) operate as an encouragement to Austria, to act with energy on the side of Venice and the Tyrol for the recovery of a security against France in that quarter, of which she has been entirely deprived by the stipulations of the Treaty of Lunéville. Should Austria, by the example of the Russian operations in Naples, be brought into action, not only would the South of Italy at least to the Arno, be immediately delivered, but the great objects of the concert would thereby at once be revived, and the estimated number of 400,000 men might be collected and employed for the general deliverance of Europe. The occupation of the district between the Elbe and the Baltic would not indeed hold out so early or such extensive prospects of any general influence on the course of events. The occupation however of that district would, in the first instance, have the effect of checking the progress of French ambition, and of counter-acting any secret negotiation which may be on foot for the occupation and partition of those countries. Further advantages might by contingent events be derived from such a position, if securely maintained, a force might ultimately be collected from Hanover, Denmark, and Sweden, which, reinforced by a powerful army of Russians, and assisted by demonstrations and co-operation on the side of Flushing, might, if the Dutch nation should manifest a disposition to throw off the yoke of slavery with which they are oppressed, effect the deliverance of the United Provinces, especially if the collection of such a force and the temptation of the acquisitions to be offered to Prussia should at length induce that Government to consult its true interest and adopt a firm, wise, and dignified line of policy.

Such being the immediate and possible advantages to be derived from the secure occupation of the two points in question, there arise three other heads of consideration necessary to be discussed before those measures can be determined.

1st. Upon what grounds the occupation of those countries is to be assumed.

2nd. How great a force, and at what expense, it will necessarily be employed, how long and with what expectation of a favourable result this defensive system can be continued; and, lastly, how far it has been ascertained that either or both the

lines of frontier above alluded to, are capable of such a defence as may defy the undivided exertions of the French power.

Upon the first head perhaps no great difficulty may exist; there is little doubt that with respect to Swedish Pomerania, Mecklenburgh, Lubeck, &c., the respective Sovereigns of those districts would readily invite or receive the security offered by Great Britain and Russia. At Naples there probably exists an equal disposition to invite the assistance of a united British and Russian army, if such a force should present itself within reach of affording immediate protection to those Kingdoms; indeed the recent threat of Buonaparte that he would consider Naples as in a state of war with France if his title of King of Italy should not be acknowledged on a given day, would be sufficient, in any consequence of that threat, to justify the occupation of Naples by the allies of his Sicilian Majesty. If the threat should be followed by war, the assistance will of course be invited and accepted, if it be followed by a compelled acknowledgment of a title, which implies in terms the annihilation of the Sicilian Monarchy, the King of Naples can no longer be considered in a situation to give the consent or refusal of an independent Sovereign, and his deliverance may be lawfully undertaken without requiring his assent.

With respect to the second consideration, it has undoubtedly been a question frequently agitated, whether an absolute defensive in war were admissible in principle; or possible in practice, with a general conclusion against the adoption of such a state of war; in the present instance, however, it is worthy of consideration how far such a system may operate to the effectual injury of the particular enemy against whom it shall be employed. There is every reason to expect that the command of the sea and the resources of the countries within the reach of the two proposed points of operation, would enable the Allies to supply their armies at a much cheaper rate, and in greater abundance, than could the enemy acting against those lines of frontier, and drawing his supplies from the country immediately behind him. The consideration of relative numbers may also make an important difference in the expense of the warfare, if, from the nature of the country, a comparatively small army should be found sufficient to

occupy the exertions of a very considerable force of the enemy. A long and unsuccessful series of efforts would tend, more than any thing, to lower the military estimation of Buonaparte, and thereby to overturn his usurped dominion. This however must depend upon the answer to the second head of consideration, which I have not materials to ascertain, and which must depend upon the numbers proposed to be employed. This also depends upon the solution of the question in the 3rd and last head: "How far it has been ascertained that either or both of the lines of frontier alluded to, are capable of such a defence as may defy the undivided exertions of the French power." This question requires an earnest and attentive consideration. It is in all cases difficult to decide upon the expediency and practicability of military operations, without having first received very detailed information from intelligent officers well acquainted with the local circumstances and military resources of the countries in which a campaign is to be conducted. This difficulty must be felt even on an enlarged scale of active operations, where much may be trusted to contingent circumstances, and to the skilful conduct of combined and active military movements. But, in the occupation of a limited frontier, upon a system merely defensive, it is of indispensable necessity to be minutely informed of the grounds upon which a rational expectation of success, little short of absolute security, may be rested. Impressed with this view of the subject, His Majesty's Ministers are desirous of learning from the Russian Government the nature of the information it has received with respect to the most effectual mode of employing its forces without any assistance from the other great military Powers of the Continent, either on the points of which I have been treating, or in any other quarter which may have occurred to the Cabinet of St. Petersburg.

An extensive diversion of the French force to operations on the Continent, even independent of the great and decisive results which are in contemplation of the concert concluded between His Majesty and the Emperor of Russia, must evidently be an object of interest and advantage to this country; but His Majesty has too just a feeling of the nature and extent of the cordial union which so happily subsists between His Majesty and the Emperor

of Russia to be desirous of such a diversion, at the hazard of any important failure which might either be injurious to the interests and influence of Russia, or which might in any degree affect the high military reputation of that Empire. It is therefore the wish of His Majesty's Government to learn from the details collected by Russian officers how far the defence of the frontiers of the Kingdom of Naples or of any given line in the north of Germany could be undertaken with a prospect of baffling the utmost efforts of France by the opposition which Russia, unsupported by Prussian or Austrian co-operation, could present in both or either of those quarters respectively.

The desire expressed by the Russian Court of the re-establishment of peace between this country and Spain induces me to mention to Your Excellency the possibility of another course of operations, more distant indeed in prospect, and certainly less likely to be adopted with effect, than that which I have already opened.

The Kingdom of Portugal is at this moment in an uneasy and precarious state of purchased neutrality, and there is great reason to apprehend that both the military and pecuniary resources of that country are in a worse state than the Government is willing to avow. I have hitherto in vain represented to the Portuguese Minister the necessity for procuring from his Court an accurate statement of the means which it possesses, and of the assistance it would require to enable Portugal to hold the language of independence, and, at the same time, to provide such means of defence as would secure that character to the country.

The Chevalier de Souza has indeed stated in conversation that 15,000 auxiliary troops for a twelvemonth would give such protection to the country, and so much energy to the Government, that they would be enabled to place the native force on such a footing as should render it after that period sufficient for its own defence. I doubt, however, whether any energy could be created in the Portuguese Government unless the Prince Regent could be induced to commit the administration of affairs to different Ministers, who should not either from the operation of their fears or their prejudices appear so entirely devoted to France. The recall of Messrs. de Souza and d'Ameida, or the appointment of

any other persons of energy and decision of character, might possibly restore Portugal to such a state of exertion as might place that country out of the reach of French aggression. That point being established, it might be worth consideration whether the present disposition of the Spanish nation, of a great proportion of its ancient nobility, and of the Prince of Asturias, assisted by Portugal and the auxiliary forces employed in that country, might not at once deliver the King of Spain from the control of France and the domineering influence of the Prince of Peace, and once again firmly establish the barrier of the Pyrenees between Spain and France. I am aware that such an event might more reasonably be expected as the consequence of a general confederacy of the great military Powers of the Continent, than as the partial operation of a more limited concert, but in suggesting even less probable subjects of discussion, I am fulfilling the disposition of His Majesty's Government to comply with the desire of the Russian Cabinet that the means of acting against France without the assistance of Austria and Prussia should be amply discussed and fully considered.

[*Endorsed.*]

DRAFT
To LORD G. L. GOWER,
July, 1805.

APPENDIX C

THE TRAFALGAR SIGNAL, 1816

Signal No. I. 7. Cut through the Enemy's Line in the Order of Sailing in Two Columns

The Admiral will make known what number of ships from the Van Ship of the enemy the Weather Division is to break through the enemy's line, and the same from the rear at which the Lee Division is to break through their line.

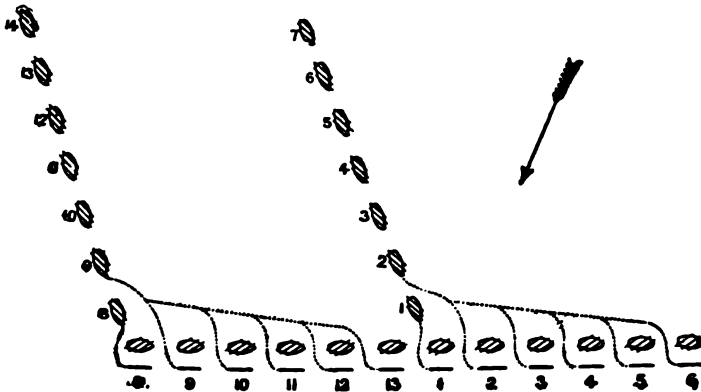


DIAGRAM OF THE TRAFALGAR SIGNAL

From the *Signal Book* of 1816

To execute this signal the fleet is to form in the Order of Sailing in two columns, should it not be so formed already; the leader of each column steering down for the position pointed out, where he is to cut through the enemy's line.

If the Admiral wishes any particular conduct to be pursued by

the leader of the Division in which he happens not to be, after the line is broken, he will of course point it out. If he does not, it is to be considered that the conduct of the Lee Division, after breaking the line, is left to its commander.

In performing this evolution, the second astern of the leader is to pass through the line astern of the ship next ahead of where her leader broke through, and so on in succession, breaking through all parts of the enemy's line ahead of their leaders, as described in the Plate.

By this arrangement no ship will have to pass the whole of the enemy's line. If, however, in consequence of any circumstance, the rear ships should not be able to cut through in their assigned places, the captains of these ships, as well as the ships which are deprived of opponents in the enemy's line by this mode of attack, are to act to the best of their judgment for the destruction of the enemy, unless a disposition to the contrary has been previously made.

It will also be seen that by breaking the line in this order the enemy's van ships will not be able to assist either the Centre or the Rear without tacking or wearing for that purpose.

NOTE.—Owing to the diagram in the plate being apparently incomplete, the significance of the signal and its instruction is somewhat obscured. The diagram shows an attack end-on in two divisions upon an equal number of ships, all of which are engaged. But the first and last paragraphs of the instructions make it clear that a concentration on the rear and centre of a superior fleet is intended as at Trafalgar, and we must assume that the unengaged van of the enemy is not shown. The intention then becomes clear. It is a device to reduce the risk which was so widely recognised in Nelson's attack. So far as the weather column is concerned, the exposure of the leading ship to a dangerous concentration remains. But in the lee column it is avoided. Instead of leading for the van ships of the section which she is to cut off, she leads for the rearmost, and is thus less exposed to a concentrated fire. The rest of her division then engage in succession and in reverse order till the assigned interval is reached.

Another advantage of this modification of the attack is that every enemy's ship is doubled on by the British ships as they pass to

their proper stations. Thus in the lee line No. 9 fires her starboard guns on the ship which No. 8 is engaging to leeward, and reserves her larboard guns to rake her proper opponent as she passes through the line under her stern. Similarly the British No. 10 would double on the two ships engaged by Nos. 8 and 9 in succession, and so on. If the leading ship in each division survived the first shock, as they did at Trafalgar, the attack is obviously very formidable, but in a commanding breeze it could easily be parried or avoided by the regular French methods.

Its interest, however, remains, viz., that being clearly founded on Nelson's Memorandum, it represents an end-on attack in line-ahead, and seeks by an ingenious modification to minimise its obvious tactical defects.

APPENDIX D

LORD NELSON'S MEMORANDUM

[*Holograph draft in Nelson's hand, unsigned; amended in that of his chaplain, Dr. Scott. Two sheets (eight pages 4to), British Museum*].¹

*Mem.^o*²

MEMORANDUM

*Victory, off Cadix, 9th Oct. 1805.*³

THINKING it almost impossible to bring a fleet of forty sail of the line into line of battle in variable winds thick weather and other circumstances which must occur, without such a loss of time that the opportunity would probably be lost of bringing the enemy to battle in such a manner as to make the business decisive—

I have therefore made up my mind to keep the fleet in that position of sailing (with the exception of the first and second in command) that the order of sailing is to be the order of battle, placing the fleet in two lines of sixteen ships each with an advanced squadron of eight of the fastest sailing two-decked ships *which*² will always make if wanted a line of twenty-four sail, on whichever line the commander-in-chief may direct.

The second in command will³ after my intentions are made known to him have the entire direction of his line to make the attack upon the enemy and to follow up the blow until they are captured or destroyed.

¹ Paragraphing and punctuation are given as in the original. From the nature of Scott's amendments (printed in italics) it would seem as though he read the draft over to Nelson and suggested improvements in grammar, &c., as he went on.

² Inserted by Scott.

³ Nelson first wrote here "in fact command his line and," but the words are deleted, presumably to make it clear he was not to have the direction of his line at first.

If the enemy's fleet should be seen to windward in line of battle, and that the two lines¹ and the advanced squadron can fetch them² they will probably be so extended that their van could not succour their rear.

I should therefore probably make the second in command's³ signal, to lead through about the twelfth ship from the rear (or wherever he³ could fetch, if not able to get as far advanced). My line would lead through about their centre and the advanced squadron to cut two three or four ships ahead of their centre so far as to ensure getting at their commander-in-chief on whom every effort must be made to capture [him].⁴

The whole impression of the British fleet⁵ must be to overpower from two to three ships ahead of their commander-in-chief supposed to be in the centre to the rear of their fleet. I will suppose⁶ twenty sail of the enemy's⁷ line to be untouched, it must be some time before they could perform a manœuvre to bring their force compact to attack any part of the British fleet engaged or to succour their own ships, which indeed would be impossible, without mixing with the ships engaged.⁸ Something must be left to chance; nothing is sure in a sea fight beyond all others. Shot will carry away the masts and yards of friends as well as foes but I look with confidence to a victory before the van of the enemy could succour their rear⁹ and then that the British fleet would most of them be ready to receive their twenty-sail of the line, or to pursue them, should they endeavour to make off.

¹ For the words "to windward in line of battle, and that the two lines," Nelson first wrote, "to windward, but in that position that the two lines."

² Here are deleted the words, "I shall suppose them forty-six sail in the line of battle." The marginal note (see below, note 6 on next page) was substituted.

³ "Your" deleted.

⁴ Deleted by Nelson.

⁵ "Fleet" inserted.

⁶ For "I will suppose" he first wrote "supposing."

⁷ "Enemy's" inserted.

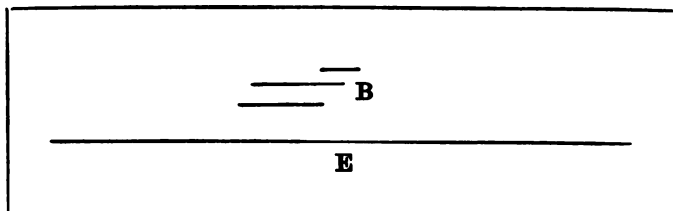
⁸ Here Scott inserted an asterisk referring to a note which Nelson wrote in the upper margin, reversing the paper. It is as follows: "The enemy's fleet is supposed to consist of 46 sail of the line, British fleet 40. If either be less, only a proportionate number of enemy's ships are to be cut off. B. to be $\frac{1}{2}$ superior to the E. cut off."

⁹ "Friends" deleted and "rear" substituted.

If the van of the enemy tacks the captured ships must run to leeward of the British fleet, if the enemy wears the British must place themselves between the enemy and the captured and disabled British ships and should the enemy close I have no fears as to the result.

The second in command will in all possible things direct the movements of his line by keeping them as compact as the nature of the circumstances will admit. Captains are to look to their particular line as their rallying point. But in case signals can neither be seen or perfectly understood no captain can do very wrong if he places his ship alongside that of an enemy.

¹ Of the intended attack from to windward. The enemy in the line of battle ready to receive an attack.



The divisions of the British fleet will be brought nearly within gunshot of the enemy's centre. The signal will most probably then ² be made for the lee line to bear up together to set all their sails, even steering-sails ³ in order to get as quickly as possible to the enemy's line and to cut through, beginning from the 12 ship from the enemy's rear. Some ships may not get through their exact place but they will always be at hand to assist their friends and

¹ The draft breaks off before this clause with a space. "Of the intended attack from to windward," occupies just one line, so that it may or may not have been intended as a heading to all that follows. The diagram is very roughly drawn. The lines are not straight or parallel, as in the diagram above, but their relative proportions and distances (half scale) are preserved.

² "Then" inserted by Nelson.

³ In the upper margin is this note: "Vide instructions for signal, Yellow with blue fly. Page 17. Eighth flag, with reference to appendix." The "Appendix" was a small pamphlet of additional signals issued by the Admiralty in 1804. This signal, however, is not in it. The presumption is that Nelson himself added it to the Appendix.

if any are thrown round the rear of the enemy they will effectually complete the business of twelve sail of the enemy.

Should the enemy wear together or bear up and sail large still the twelve ships composing in the first position the enemy's rear are to be *the*¹ object of attack of the lee line, unless otherwise directed from the commander-in-chief which is scarcely to be expected as the entire management of the lee line after the intentions of the commander-in-chief is² signified is intended to be left to the judgment of the admiral commanding that line.

The remainder of the enemy's fleet 34 sail are to be left to the management of the commander-in-chief, who will endeavour to take care that the movements of the second in command are as little interrupted as possible.³

¹ Inserted by Scott.

² Scott suggested "are."

³ Here Nelson came to the extreme end of the second sheet of paper.

APPENDIX E

LISTS AND PLANS SHOWING THE MANNER OF ENGAGING AT TRAFALGAR

1. A list attached to Collingwood's official despatch. *Nicolas*, vii. 215.

2. *The Britannia list*.—From the Journal of Lieutenant John Barclay of that ship. *Great Sea Fights* (N.R.S.), ii. 215.

3. *The "Naval Chronicle" Plan*.—Published in the *Naval Chronicle*, December 31, 1805 (vol. xiv. p. 495), and reproduced in Mr. Newbolt's *Year of Trafalgar*, p. 98. This was the earliest plan printed. It represents three stages of the approach as in the official French plan (*ante*, p. 360), namely, the first "At daylight," and the second "At 9 o'clock," showing the British fleet in process of forming sailing order as it bore up; and the third "At 12 o'clock at noon," showing the actual moment of contact with the columns almost vertical to the enemy's line, but slightly converging. In the accompanying note we are told it was engraved from a drawing furnished "by a gentleman who copied it from the original in the possession of the Admiralty." . . . It further states that "The situation, as here represented, has been vouched to be correct by Admiral Villeneuve in the original sent to the Admiralty." Several errors, and particularly in the order of the allied ships, suggest that the work was hurriedly and carelessly done by the anonymous gentleman.

4. *The Craig Plan*.—This little-known plan is a hand-coloured copperplate engraving from the design of the famous William Marshall Craig, drawing-master to the Princess Charlotte,

and miniature painter to the Duke of York (*Dictionary of National Biography*), who was the most fashionable designer of his time. It was published on January 9, 1806, the day of Nelson's funeral, by Edward Orme, "Printseller to the King," a well-known naval and military publisher. About six months later he included it with other similar prints in his *Graphic History of Horatio Nelson*, the dedication of which was accepted by the King. It contains the noon position only; that is, the actual attack, and bears the inscription: "Position of the combined forces of France and Spain at the commencement of the action," &c. At the foot is this note, "The above plan has been certified as to its correctness by the Flag-officers of the *Euryalus* and Admiral Villeneuve." From this it would appear that it was taken from the same original as the *Naval Chronicle* plan, though it is more carefully done. That this was its origin is certain, for at the top half of the plate is a picture purporting to represent Nelson explaining his plan of attack to his officers, and on the table before him is a plan showing the attack as it was delivered, with all three positions as in the *Naval Chronicle*. The inference, then, from what we learn from these two sources, is that shortly after the battle, while Collingwood and Villeneuve were on board the *Euryalus* with their staffs, a plan was prepared in concert between them, and that it was forwarded to the Admiralty in the *Euryalus* when she went home with despatches and Villeneuve. It must be doubted, however, whether the plan was regarded as authentic for anything but the disposition of the Combined Fleet, which, indeed, is all the inscription claims. Clarke and M'Arthur state, on what they regarded as very high authority, that "the British fleet was certainly not in the position stated in the plan sent to the Admiralty, and signed Magendie, captain of the *Bucentaure*." (*Life of Nelson*, vol. ii., *Continuation*, p. 167.) Clearly, then, "the plan sent to the Admiralty" must have been the original of that signed by Magendie, which is given by Colonel Desbrière in his *Trafalgar*, *Appendix*, p. 186. By "Flag-officers of the *Euryalus*," therefore, the Craig print may mean not Collingwood and his staff, but the French "flag-officers" only; but as Villeneuve is specially

mentioned as the French authority, it is equally likely that the British "flag-officers" are meant.

In any case it must have been considered that the delineation of the British fleet was not quite correct in detail. Nothing seriously wrong is suggested. Clarke and M'Arthur imply only that Magendie's plan made the lines too regular, not that the general disposition or manner of approach was wrong.¹ It is evident, then, that it was the order and position of the British ships which left room for improvement and not the general line of the attack. This is placed beyond doubt by comparing the plans of Craig and the *Naval Chronicle*. It will be seen that in Craig's design a number of alterations had been made in the British fleet, but the general plan of attack, in two lines ahead almost vertical, remains the same in both. The alterations given to Craig were in details of the order and positions of individual units only. *Britannia*, for instance, instead of being fourth in Nelson's line, as she is in the *Naval Chronicle* and Magendie's plan, is shown hauled out to windward, with the seventh ship, *Agamemnon*, passing her, approximately as in the Harper plan (*Frontispiece*). Moreover, the *Neptune* and *Leviathan*, instead of being in accurate line (as Clarke and M'Arthur complained), are represented also hauling out to windward as though to pass ahead of the *Victory* in accordance with the signals that had been made, certainly to the *Leviathan*, and probably to the *Neptune* as her next ahead.

On the whole, then, from the above hints and the standing of the designer and publisher, we may take it that the Craig engraving is the most authentic plan we have. True, it does not show the line of bearing in the lee division, but this was only natural, since Collingwood did not regard it as of sufficient importance for mention in his dispatch, and neither Villeneuve nor Magendie could have seen it.

5. *The Magendie Plan*.—From Colonel Desbrière's version of the original in the *Archives de la Marine* (Paris). This was Magendie's final plan. He had sent to Paris an earlier and in-

¹ Their words are, "Our ships could not be exactly in the same track astern of each other."

correct one from Cadiz shortly after the battle, which is reproduced in Mr. Fraser's *The Enemy at Trafalgar*. The present one was attached to his official Report, which he sent to Decrès from London. In the covering letter he says: "The first report which I sent you from Cadiz, not being very correct, as well for all the positions as on certain details and information which the difficulties we were in prevented my getting, I beg you, my lord, to regard it as *non venu*, and only to consider this one." (See Desbrière's *Trafalgar, App. of Documents*, p. 177, *note*.) This amended version appears to have been the foundation of Prigny's final plan (see *ante*, p. 399), and also of the one Dumanoir exhibited at his court-martial, both of which are given by Desbrière.¹

6. *The Lucas Plan*.—Attached to the report of Capt. Lucas of the *Rédoubtable*, who came to England as a prisoner with Ville-neuve. It is given both by Mr. Fraser and by Col. Desbrière (*Trafalgar, App.* 198). It represents the attack being made vertically, as Lucas describes it, in two *pelotons* led by the *Victory* and *Sovereign*. Though admittedly inaccurate in detail, it is valuable as showing how irregularly the British columns must have been formed. There is no trace of a feint on the van. Lucas, who describes the last stage of the attack with special care, evidently was unaware of any such movement. On the contrary, he says the *Victory* "*manœuvrait pour attaquer notre corps de bataille*," and this is what he shows.

7. *The Harper Plan (Frontispiece)*.—This hitherto unpublished plan is in MS., coloured. It is said to have belonged to a petty officer called Harper, who was present at the battle, and to have been handed down in his family, till it recently came into the author's possession. Its value is that it is clearly independent, and not founded on any other known plan, and especially that it alone shows Collingwood's line of bearing, and shows it exactly

¹ There are two other plans given by Desbrière which make Collingwood's attack practically parallel. One is that prepared by Captain Épron of the *Argonaute*. The other is from the archives of the Captain-General of Cadiz, but both are so fanciful in other particulars that they cannot be regarded as of sufficient authority to contradict the weight of higher testimony that is against them.

as would be expected from the signals that were made. For Nelson's line it is of no value, except for the position of *Britannia*, since it does not give the irregularity which Nelson's sudden changes of intention created in his van.

8. *The Nicolas Plan*.—Published by him in the *Nelson's Despatches* (vol. vii. p. 301), 1846, without any indication of its origin. This also is clearly not based on the Admiralty plan, for Gravina's squadron is shown prolonging the rear, and not passing up to leeward, as in Magendie's; while in the British fleet *Britannia* is fourth in Nelson's line, and *Dreadnought* is leading Collingwood's second division. Moreover, it shows the irregularity in Nelson's van, but not quite in the same way as the Craig plan.

9. *The Lawrie and Whittle Plan*.—A coloured "bird's-eye" diagram in the Admiralty Library entitled "The ever-memorable battle off Cape Trafalgar, October 21st 1805. By authority. Published 12 December 1806 by Robert Lawrie and James Whittle, No. 53 Fleet Street, London." Beneath the plan is a description of the battle beginning, "The above sketch which has been sanctioned by the approbation of several officers of distinguished rank who had a share in the victory," &c. And at the foot they acknowledge their debt to Captains Blackwood (of the *Euryalus*) and Lapenotiere (of the *Pickle*) "for their communication of the particulars exhibited in the plan of the engagement." It is frankly diagrammatical, and is obviously based on Collingwood's official dispatch which is printed in the explanatory matter. It represents the attack in two strictly formed lines ahead, moving on a slightly curving course nearly perpendicular to the alignment of the allied centre. The head of Collingwood's line is thus inclined to the enemy's rear as that of Nelson's is to their van. But in neither case is any indication of a line of bearing

In endeavouring to prove that Nelson's attack was not practically vertical, some writers would discard the testimony of the existing plans. A letter of Captain Moorsom's is quoted, in which he says: "I have seen several plans of the action, but none to answer my ideas of it. Indeed, scarce any plans can be given.

It was irregular, and the ships got down as fast as they could and into any space when they found the enemy, without attending to their place in the line." On this three remarks arise. 1. The letter was written from Spithead on December 4th, before the Craig plan was published. 2. He is clearly referring not to the general plan of attack, but to the positions of individual units in action. 3. In a previous letter from Gibraltar, November 1st, he himself gave a rough diagram showing the British fleet "going down in two columns pointing towards the centre," and only slightly inclined from the perpendicular. (See *Great Sea Fights*, ii. p. 242, where the diagram is omitted. The original is in the possession of Lady Longmore.)

SIGNALS—continued

Signal.		By Whom Made.	To Whom.	Authority.		Remarks.
Signification in Signal Book.	Number.			Log.	Time Logged.	
When lying to, or sailing by the wind, to bear up and sail large on the course . . . pointed out by signal.	76 E. flags	Victory	General	Bellerophon O Ajax C Achille M ¹ Naiad M ¹ Defence M & O ¹ Euryalus M	6.42 6.45 6.50 6.50 7.0 7.0	¹ Do not mention compass flags.
The ships may take such stations as are most convenient at the time without regard to any established order of sailing.	265	Victory	Prince Dread-nought	Téméraire M	{ 7.23 7.25	
For Captain to come on board Flagship.	—	Victory	Euryalus Sirius Sirius Phoebe Naiad Naiad	Téméraire M Euryalus Sirius N Téméraire M Naiad M	7.40 8.0 7.45 7.46 7.50	
The ships may take such stations as are most convenient at the time, &c.	265	Victory	Britannia Prince Dread-nought	Belleisle M	8.0	

SIGNALS EXTRACTED FROM THE LOGS AND JOURNALS FOR 21ST OCTOBER 1805

Signal.		By Whom Made.	To Whom.	Authority.		Remarks.
Signification in Signal Book.	Number.			Log.	Time Logged.	
Form the order of sailing in two columns.	73	Victory	General	Belleisle M & O Bellerophon O Ajax M Orion O Defiance Mars M & O	5.40 ? 6.0 6.0 6.0 6.9	
When lying-to, or sailing by the wind, to bear up and sail large on the course steered by the Admiral or that pointed out by signal.	76 E.N.E. flags	Victory	General	Belleisle M & O Bellerophon O Ajax M & O Mars M & O Orion M & O Defiance M	6.0 ? 6.10 6.14 6.15 6.15	
Prepare for battle.	13	Victory	General	Belleisle O Bellerophon O Ajax C Defiance M & O Conqueror M Naiad M Neptune M Euryalus M	6.0 6.20 6.20 6.30 6.35 6.40 7.0 7.0	

SIGNALS—continued

Signal.		By Whom Made.	To Whom.	Authority.		Remarks.
Signification in Signal Book.	Number.			Log.	Time Logged.	
When lying to, or sailing by the wind, to bear up and sail large on the course . . . pointed out by signal.	76 E. flags	Victory	General	Bellerophon O Ajax C Achille M ¹ Naiad M ¹ Defence M & O ¹ Euryalus M	6.42 6.46 6.50 6.50 7.0 7.0	¹ Do not mention compass flag.
The ships may take such stations as are most convenient at the time without regard to any established order of sailing.	265	Victory	Prince Dread-nought	} Téméraire M	{ 7.23 7.25	
For Captain to come on board Flagship.	—	Victory	Euryalus	Téméraire M Euryalus Sirius N	7.40 8.0 7.45	
			Sirius Sirius } Phoebe Naiad Naiad	Téméraire M Naiad M	7.46 7.50	
The ships may take such stations as are most convenient at the time, &c.	265	Victory	Britannia Prince Dread-nought	} Belleisle M	8.0	

When lying to, &c., to bear up and sail large on the course steered by the Admiral . . .	76	Victory	Prince ^a	Téméraire M Naiad M	8.33 8.40	^a "Hauled to port to give room for the line to form. Answered signal to bear up."—Prince M.
For the ships of the Fleet to be kept on the larboard line of bearing from each other though on the starboard tack.	50	Royal Sovereign	Larboard Division ^a	Defence M & O Agamemnon M	8.45 ?	^a Agamemnon notes it as a "General" signal.
Form the larboard line of bearing, steering the course indicated. <i>The ships to bear from each other on the point of the compass on which they would sail, keeping a point from the wind if formed in a line ahead on the larboard tack.</i>	43 ^a	Royal Sovereign	Larboard Division	Defence M & O Téméraire M	8.46 8.47	^a This signal annulled the previous one, which was probably hoisted in error.
Make more sail. The leading ship first, if in line of battle or order of sailing.	33	Royal Sovereign	Larboard Division	Belleisle M & O Defence M & O Téméraire M Revenge M	8.45 8.46 8.47 9.0	
Alter the course (! together) one point to port.	32 (?) ^a	Admiral	General	Belleisle M & O	9.0	^a This appears to be an error. No other ship mentions such a signal, nor does any ship's log record such an alteration of course.

SIGNALS—continued

Signal		By Whom Made.	To Whom.	Authority.		Remarks.
Signification in Signal Book.	Number.			Log.	Time Logged.	
Interchange places in the line or order of sailing. <i>The ships which are to change will have their signals shown at the same time.</i>	48 with Belle- isle's & Tonnant's pennants	Royal Sovereign	Belleisle Tonnant	Belleisle M & O Téméraire M	9.20 9.23	
Make more sail.	88	Royal Sovereign	Belleisle	Belleisle M & O Téméraire M	9.30 9.35	
A particular ship, division, or squadron to take a station bearing from the Admiral as pointed out by compass signal.	267 with S.W. flags	Royal Sovereign	Belleisle	Belleisle M & O Téméraire M	9.30 9.35	
Take a station astern of the ship whose distinguishing signal will be shown after this signal has been answered. <i>The ships are to act as circumstances may require to make room for the ship to take the station pointed out for her.</i>	269 with Téméraire's pennants	Victory	Leviathan	Téméraire M	9.38	

A particular ship . . . is to take a station bearing from the Admiral as pointed out by compass signal. (This is the signification as amended in the "Appendix" of 1804.)	267 ¹ ?	Royal Sovereign	Revenge	Téméraire M	9.40	¹ Also recorded by Captain Moorsom of the Revenge (see <i>Logs of Great Sea Fights</i> , ii. p. 244). In neither place is a compass signal mentioned.
Make more sail.	88	Royal Sovereign	Revenge	Téméraire M Revenge O	9.40 ?	
Take a station astern of the ship whose distinguishing signal will be shown . . .	269 with Royal Sovereign's pennants	Victory	Mars	Téméraire M	9.41	
Alter the course together one point to starboard . . . ; the ships preserving their relative bearing from each other.	81	Royal Sovereign	Belleisle Achille	Belleisle M & O Téméraire M	9.40 9.42	
Lead the Fleet, or a particular column pointed out by signal. <i>If the line of battle be formed, or forming when this signal is made, the ship to which it is addressed is to be considered as the leading ship of the line.</i>	97 ² with lar-board divisional flag	Victory	Mars	Téméraire M Mars M (Log) Conqueror	9.58 10.5 10.10	² Not answered. Mars (O) also enters it, but at 9.5, which, presumably, is an error for 10.5.
Prepare for battle.	13	Victory	General	Minotaur M Picble M	10.0	

SIGNAL —continued

Signal.		By Whom Made.	To Whom.	Authority.		Remarks.
Signification in Signal Book.	Number.			Log.	Time Logged.	
Come to the wind together on the larboard tack. <i>This signal also implies wearing, if necessary, from the starboard to the larboard tack.</i>	102 ¹	Defence	Phœbe	Defence M & O	10.40	¹ Probably a mistake for 107, 108, or 109, "To close," &c.
Make more sail.	88	Defence	Orion	Defence M & O	10.41	² "Answered signal and crowded on stunsails." (Similar signals are recorded in the Log and Journal of Orion as having been addressed to Mars and Leviathan respectively at 12.15, but it is obviously impossible for such a signal to have been made at the moment when the heads of the columns were just engaging.)
Lead the Fleet, or a particular column . . .	37	Victory	Mars	Mars M (Journal):	10.45	

5	3	307	Victory	Defence	Téméraire M	11.3
		807	Victory	Africa	Africa M Nahad M Orion M Orion C Téméraire M	10.53 11.5 11.15 11.25 11.55
		83	Defence	Orion	Orion M & O	11.32
		88	Royal Sovereign	General	Mars M Bellerophon	11.40... ?
		Telegraph message ⁴	Victory	? Royal Sovereign	Euryalus M	11.40
2	8	56	Royal Sovereign	Bellefleur	Bellefleur M & O	11.50
		307	Victory	General	Téméraire M	11.55

³ By Bellerophon this was after No. 63, "Prepare to anchor." She also enters it as "80" by error.

⁴ See Nicolas' *Nelson's Despatches*, vol. vii. pp. 148, 186.

SIGNALS—continued

Signal.		By Whom Made.	To Whom.	Authority.		Remarks.
Signification in Signal Book.	Number.			Log.	Time Logged.	
England expects that every man will do his duty.	Telegraph message	Victory	General	Orion O Naiad M Neptune M Defence M & O Euryalus Defiance M & O Revenge M	11.25 11.35 11.40 11.48 11.56 12.0 12.10	
Prepare to anchor after the close of day.	8 Preparative with 63	Victory	General	Africa O Neptune M Bellierophon M Naiad M Orion M & O Euryalus M Dreadnought M Ajax O Defence M Ajax M Téméraire M Conqueror M ¹ Defiance M	11.52 11.46 12.0 12.0 12.0 12.0 12.0 12.5 12.5 12.5 12.10 12.10 12.15	
Take a station astern of the ship whose distinguishing signal will be shown . . .	269 Victory's pennants	Victory	Téméraire	Neptune Téméraire M L Conqueror M	11.50 12.0 12.15	¹ Log quotes "63" in error.

Engage the enemy more closely.	16	Victory	Africa	Africa M Conqueror M	12.0 12.25
Engage the enemy more closely.	16	Victory	General	Belleisle C Neptune N Téméraire M Ajax C Bellerophon C Orion M & C Achille M Africa M Ajax M Naiad M Euryalus M Conqueror M	11.55 11.56 12.10 12.10 12.13 12.15 12.15 12.15 12.15 12.18 12.20 12.20 12.30
Make all sail possible with safety to the masts.	307	Victory	Africa	Conqueror M L Téméraire M Achille M Naiad M	12.25 12.26 12.30 12.30

APPENDIX G

ADDITIONAL NOTES

1. "*Nauticus*" and Lord Barham, p. 179.

The publication in the *Barham Papers* (vol. iii. pp. 185 *et seq.*) of the letters of "*Nauticus*" throws a new and interesting light on the strategy which Lord Barham adopted in July. It was not till long afterwards that he knew the identity of his pseudonymous correspondent, and was able to express the "estimation" in which he held his communication. The writer proved to be a purser called Nicholas Brown, who for eight years was secretary to Lord Keith, that is from 1799 till his retirement in 1807. Brown's staff experience was therefore rich and varied, and he had had abundant opportunity of becoming familiar with the strategical ideas of Lord Keith and his entourage.

The first of the series is a letter he wrote to Lord Melville in March 1805, after Missiessy's escape. Its purport is to urge that Finisterre is a far better station than Cork for any detachment that can be spared from the Western Squadron for intercepting squadrons breaking out of French ports, or attempting to break in. To support his view he cited the cases of 1793, 1796, and 1799. But whatever the merits of the plan it was impossible to man enough ships to provide such a detachment.

His first letter to Lord Barham was written on May 16, when it was known that Villeneuve had disappeared to the westward. He thought his objective must be in the West Indies, and that, in conjunction with Missiessy's squadron, he would succeed, unless Nelson had followed him at once. But whatever may be the object, he argues "there can be little doubt they will very soon seek their way back in a body." The proper course therefore was

not to follow them with a squadron from hence to intercept them on their return. He calculates their united force at thirty of the line, and proceeds to discuss with much ability their most probable course. In common with the majority of officers he came to the conclusion that the mouth of the Straits is the real danger point. A return to a port in the Bay would be comparatively innocuous, for he judged, as proved to be the truth, that we should always be able to assemble a superior fleet before they were in a condition to take the sea again after their exhausting cruise. If, on the other hand, they proceeded into the Straits, it would be possible for them to seize command of the Mediterranean, and be in a position to deal a disastrous and lasting blow to the British cause. "Should they get to one of the ports on the Atlantic," he says, "we should have them in some measure in check; but if we fatally find that such a force reaches the Mediterranean the consequences are hardly to be calculated upon." He foretold that Villeneuve would probably return towards the end of July (as he did). Before his letter was sent off, however, his whole appreciation was upset by the false news which the *Wasp* had sent in of Villeneuve having doubled back to Cadiz, and he did not deliver it to Barham till the truth was known.

This was on May 31. Ten days later, on hearing of Missiessy's unexpected return to Rochefort alone, he again urged the propriety of holding the Finisterre area instead of that of Cork, and accompanied his proposal with a scheme by which the necessary ships could be manned by increasing the quota of marines to one-fourth of the complement of every ship, and by raising 30,000 seamen and landsmen by parochial ballot. All these recommendations were ignored.

On July 6 the news that Villeneuve had made for Martinique drew from Brown a third appreciation. He deduced that his objective was the Leeward Islands or Jamaica, probably the latter, and unless Nelson was in time to interfere he would be coming back immediately, as he had foretold, but with less than thirty ships, owing to the return of Missiessy's squadron. In order to intercept them he proposed three movements. First, a squadron of fourteen of the line off Cadiz to shut that port to them; secondly, the Ferrol squadron made up also to fourteen, to be stationed

"thirty to forty leagues to the southward and westward of Cape Finisterre" in readiness to intercept them from "Vigo, Ferrol, and even Rochefort." Thirdly, the Channel Fleet "to be stationed forty leagues to the south-westward of Brest . . . to prevent their approach to that harbour, and to be at hand to intercept them if they should push for L'Orient, as well as to cut off the Ferrol squadron should it venture to run for Brest."

It will be observed that this plan did not differ from that which Barham drew up in any material point, except that it made no provision against the Channel being rushed by the Brest squadron in Cornwallis's absence. "The removal," he says, "of our Brest and Ferrol fleets from their ordinary ground would be but a few weeks." Coming as the plan did from Keith's staff, its breezy contempt of the invasion danger is very remarkable. Yet we know it was in a great measure justified, since Ganteaume regarded it as madness to enter the Channel in any circumstances with nothing but his own squadron. The only defect Brown could see in his plan was that it left the enemy a chance of getting into Lisbon. He pointed out that when Craig's expedition was there the French ambassador had claimed similar privileges in case of need, and he advised that some extraordinary means should be provided for enabling the Finisterre squadron to deal with an attempt to enter the Tagus.

Barham, however, was not prepared to leave Brest open "for a few weeks." He confined Cornwallis's movement to six or eight days, and as Napoleon overrode Ganteaume's objections, it happened that our squadron only resumed its position just in time to prevent the French coming out. A result of Barham's sound caution was that Allemand escaped to sea, and a month later, when news of his depredations was coming in, and Calder was known to have retreated, Brown wrote again reproaching Barham with not having followed his advice, and with having permitted a premature concentration off Ushant, and particularly with having recalled Stirling's squadron so soon from Calder.

It is easy to be wise after the event. Brown's plan, whether originating with Keith or not, was undoubtedly brilliant, and marked with much strategical imagination. But in the light of all the circumstances, as we now know them, and as Barham and

Pitt knew them, most men will probably agree it risked too much. Barham's modification of it was undoubtedly sound, and its failure to intercept Allemand, of which Brown most severely complained, was no more than an incalculable chance of war. Ample provision had been made to all appearance, and he only escaped both Cornwallis and Calder by the skin of his teeth. Barham, moreover, justly calculated that the Rochefort squadron would not be permitted to sail till Villeneuve reappeared. He could not calculate that the orders to that effect would come just too late, as they did.

Barham seems to admit that he owed something to Brown's suggestion: but far from derogating from his reputation as a strategist, this should rather add to it. It tells us that old and self-confident as he was, he could still appreciate the genius of younger and less responsible men, and by the alchemy of his unrivalled experience and profound judgment could convert their sanguine inspirations into a sound and workable plan, and one that confined offensive operations to a limit that their defensive basis demanded.

Living, as Brown was, in the atmosphere of supreme confidence that surrounded Keith, it was natural for him to treat the invasion danger lightly. But in London, where the heart was beating, Barham saw with other and clearer eyes. In his foreground was the mighty stake at issue, and no temptation of brilliant achievement, no hope of a short cut to victory, would lure him from his vital hold on the Channel. If that were once lost, the sole ground for confidence went with it.

2. *Division of the Fleet in August*, p. 279.

The influence of Baird's expedition and the East India trade on Barham's strategy at this time is made clearer by certain letters in the *Barham Papers* (iii. pp. 97 and 275). The chairman of the East India Company had made a special appeal to the First Lord for the safeguard of the homecoming convoy, on the ground of its enormous value, and two days later, on August '18, Barham wrote to Pitt as follows:—"If I am right," he says, "in my conjecture that the Rochefort ships must have joined the Combined Squadron, and are now together at Ferrol, I think this is the proper time for

the expedition and India ships to sail from Cork." His idea then was merely to detach a squadron of five or six fast two-deckers to watch Ferrol for fourteen days till the convoys were clear. "The sending of a squadron off Ferrol will not only be a security to the expedition, but guard our very rich convoys of India ships under care of Admiral Rainier, expected within a fortnight." At the end he adds, "If any movement should take place at Ferrol before our convoys are out of danger, they can easily be reinforced from the Western squadron."

The arrangement was not very satisfactory, since it involved dividing the Western squadron piecemeal, instead of boldly into two powerful fleets, the expedient which as we now know Barham adopted in the course of the same day. What then is the explanation of his change of mind? It is to be found without doubt in the arrival of Nelson. He reached Spithead on the 18th. The news that his squadron had reinforced Cornwallis would reach Barham the next day, and assure him he could divide the fleet without reducing Cornwallis's squadron too low for safety at home. Thereupon he must have recast the plan and written his order to Cornwallis to send Cotton with half the fleet down to Ferrol.

The next day, the 20th, it was known that Cornwallis had anticipated the order. Dr. Holland Rose has kindly communicated to me a letter written by Castlereagh to Pitt at three o'clock on that day, showing that Pitt had approved the new plan. "I have just seen Lord Hawkesbury and Lord Barham," he says. "Admiral Cornwallis having anticipated your intentions by detaching twenty sail of the line off Ferrol, and the wind being now favourable, it appears to us that no time should be lost in ordering Sir D. Baird to sail. As Lord H. and Lord B. seem to entertain no doubt of this step, I shall send the orders without delay." And this he did.

This letter is perhaps open to the interpretation that it was Pitt that suggested the division to Barham. But it is more probable that in view of the anxiety to cover Baird's expedition and the India trade, the idea was the natural outcome of Nelson's arrival to all three men concerned—Cornwallis, Barham, and Pitt.

Even after the division the anxiety for the East India ships did not cease. On August 28th in sending Cornwallis his secret

orders to detach if possible four more ships from his reduced squadron to meet them, Barham wrote him a private letter in which he says, "The safety of these fleets must be our first object" (*Barham Papers*, iii. 277).

3. *Barham's Last Instruction to Nelson*, p. 321.

From a memorandum on the naval situation, which Barham sent to Pitt on September 4th (*Barham Papers*, iii. 313), it appears that his intention in sending Nelson to resume the command of the Mediterranean station was to restore the old situation there, and that he had very little hope of a decisive action. It was not the idea that the commander-in-chief should remain before Cadiz. He was to leave that position to Collingwood, giving him enough force to secure the blockade effectually. Nelson himself was then to proceed to Gibraltar, and after settling everything for the defence of that place and of the Mediterranean trade, he was "to visit the other parts of his command and form such a squadron as will embrace every duty belonging to it."

To enable him to do this Barham explains he had arranged the St. Vincent-Finisterre cruiser line, and suggested that the Russians might be induced to put under Nelson's command a squadron they were sending down to the Mediterranean. If the Swedes could be persuaded to do the same for Lord Keith, there would be no difficulty about having ships enough for the whole design. Cornwallis would continue to command from Finisterre to Beachy Head; and outside the cruiser lines Barham proposed to establish frigate squadrons for protecting our trade and annoying that of the enemy.

As for any expeditions which Pitt might require, he would reserve for their service all unappropriated ships. Seeing how strong would be the general hold on the communications these escort squadrons would not have to be large. With regard to the management and organisation of such expeditions he then proceeds to make a remarkable suggestion. He urges that the subject is such a serious one that a "proper qualified committee should be established, and well paid, to undertake it to advantage." Whether he had in his mind a joint naval and military committee we cannot tell. All he says in explanation is, "My time is so fully occupied

with the business of the Office of the Fleet that I have not a moment for detail, but will readily assist when any such committee calls upon me for assistance." No record has been found of such a committee being formed.

The memorandum appears to have received Pitt's general approval; but in acting on it there was a modification in regard to Nelson's part. It may have been suggested by Pitt, as he could hold out no hope of assistance from the Russians or Swedes, as Barham had hoped. At all events in the Draft Instructions which Barham drew up for Nelson the following day nothing is said about his proceeding up the Straits with a separate squadron. There is substituted a general authority "to form the best system for the management of so extensive a command may admit of at the time." It is of course quite possible the modification was suggested by Nelson himself.

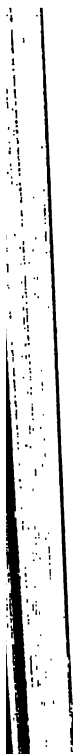
4. *Cruiser Lines*, p. 332.

It appears from the *Barham Papers* (iii. pp. 90-3) that the system of cruiser lines was suggested by Sir Home Popham in July as a measure incidental to the discontinuance of winter blockades. He recommended that for close blockade of the French Atlantic ports a system of open blockade should be substituted. In common with Howe, Kempenfelt, and many other distinguished officers, he regarded close blockade in winter time as at once inefficient and exhausting to the fleet. It was no bar to the escape of small squadrons designed to prey on commerce and for kindred purposes, and he advised a recurrence to the old plan of a flying squadron to watch Brest. To render the watch effective he proposed that "a chain of communication by frigates and small cruisers should be kept up from the ports of the Bay to the Channel, which may be extended to Cadiz; and intelligence may be communicated with the greatest facility by my telegraphic signals without the necessity of hoisting out a single boat."

Barham, who had always been opposed to a close winter blockade, adopted the proposal, and drew up a distribution of the fleet to give it effect. "To complete the plan," he concluded, "which is meant for the protection of our convoys and annoying the enemy,

I would propose a string of cruisers, having Sir H. Popham's signals, to form a system of communication between Falmouth and Gibraltar." It was intended to complete the system by extending the western telegraph to Falmouth.

The new arrangement resuscitated the chronic friction between the Irish and the Western squadrons. It entailed a partial restoration of the Cork command at Cornwallis's expense, and he formally protested against it as being in derogation of his own province. Barham received his protest with much sympathy, and in endeavouring to pacify the Admiral he reveals to us that the existing system of commands was not one that he entirely approved. "You must be aware," he wrote, "of the difficulties I am under from the habits that have been established and commands fixed before my return to the Board; and although many of them do, in no shape, meet with my approbation, yet it is out of my power to make a direct attack upon them. On the subject of port admirals having cruisers at their disposal beyond a few for convoys and advice boats, I totally disapprove of it, and have begun to draw off the king's ships, and to put them under the cruising admirals, and shall continue if I live to finish the various regulations I have in hand. . . . The principle I lay down is that as soon as we can command security at home and abroad from our line of battleships, the Atlantic should be covered with cruisers, particularly from the Western squadron and Cork" (*Barham Papers*, vol. pp. 281-3).



INDEX

A

Achille (74), 412
 Acton, Gen. Sir John, 171
 Addington, Henry, Viscount Sidmouth, 2-5, 78-9
 Admiralty, methods of war direction, 16, 204 n.; civil staff of, 321; Barham's organisation of, 91, 94-7
 Adriatic, command of, 194-5
 Advanced Squadrons, 371, 375-8, 384-5, 390, 395-8
Æolus (32), 240, 242-3, 246, 446
Ætna, bomb, 102 n.
 Affleck, V.-Ad. Philip, 78
Africa (64), 333, 427, 432-3
Agamemnon (64), 219 n., 350-1, 366, 371 n., 396
Aigle (Fr. 74), 75
Aimable (32), 346, 350
Ajax (74), 217-25, 396, 433
 Alexander I., Czar of Russia, 6, 7, 129, 258-9. *See also* Russia
 Algeçiras, flotilla at, 63, 69, 163-9
 Allemand, Comodore Zacharie I. T., Comte, 193; his cruise, 208, 236-43, 274, 292, 296-9; leaves Vigo, 335-6; further operations, 338-45, 443-5, 449-51; treatment of neutrals, 238
Amazon (38), 100, 102, 106, 109, 114-7, 119, 171, 294-6, 340
 Ambleteuse, 13. *See also* Flotilla
 Amiens, Peace of, 2, 6, 7, 64
Amphion (32), 73, 116, 119
 Anrep, General (C.-in-C., Corfu), 303
 Anson, Adm. Lord, 13
Antigua, 145, 176, 177, 182-6

Apulia, Fr. occupation of, 64. *See also* St. Cyr.
 Armament of ships, one-calibre, 52-3. *See also* Carronades
Armide (Fr. 40), 241
 Army, British, 4, 8, 10-12; "disposal force" of, 304-5, 308 n., 453, 457-8, 461-2; co-operation with fleet, 4, 28, 124, 177, 323; assisting in dock-yards, 84
Attack (12), 297
 Austerlitz, battle of, 460; campaign of, *see* Napoleon
 Austria, policy of, 11, 18, 20-3, 28, 39, 131, 140, 143, 258, 267-71, 303, 315, 321-2, 354, 461-3, Appendix A and B

B

Baird, Gen. Sir David, his expedition, 261, 304, 325; sails, 336; his narrow escape, 343, 351, 449-50, 466, 470; occupies the Cape, 469
 Baker, Capt. Thomas (*Phoenix*), 248, 444-7, 467
 Ball, Capt. Sir Alex., Gov. of Malta, 36, 64, 195
 Barbadoes, island of, 33, 83, 85, 145
Barbadoes (28), 183 n., 186 n.
 Barbé-Marbois, François, Marquis de (Fr. Finance Minister), 151
Barbuda, 176, 177, 182
Barfleur (98), 219 n.
 Barham, Adm. Sir Charles Middleton; Lord (First Lord of Admiralty), 16; his service, 76-8; appointment, 78-80, 90; resignation, 467; his orders,

82, 90-3, 124-6, 131-6, 159-62, 201-4, 239, 252-7, 274, 276-9, 310, 337, 344; his appreciations, 191-200, 337, 356-7; organisation of Admiralty, 91-7; of cruiser system, 330-4; opinion of Nelson, 311-4
 Bayntun, Capt. William Henry (*Leviathan*), 231
Beagle (18), 73, 111, 122-4, 168-9
Belleisle (74), 115, 180, 371 n., 394, 396, 411-2, 415, 430
Bellerophon (74), 167 n., 371 n., 430
Belliquez (74), 344 n.
Bellona (74), 446
 Bernadotte, Marshal, 452
 Berry, Capt. Sir Edw. (*Agamemnon*), 350 n., 366
 Bertheaume Road, 58; action in, 289
 Berthier, Marshal, 151, 307
 Bettsworth, Capt. Edm. Byron (*Curieux*), 179, 186, 200, 203
 Beurnonville, General (Fr. Amb. at Madrid), 284
 Bickerton, R.-Ad. Sir Richard, Acting C.-in-C., Mediterranean, 109, 118, 126, 162-7, 194-5, 233, 300-1, 321, 341
 Bigot de Morogues, Capt., 49, 179, 390
 Blackwood, Capt. Henry (*Euryalus*), 294-5, 299, 309, 320, 329, 353, 362-5, 370, 374, 414, 425
 Block-ships, 12, 139
 Blockade, conditions of, 147-8, 155, 362; commercial, 30, 233, 242
 Blücher, General, 459
Boadicea (38), 444
 Boards, under Admiralty, 95
 Bordeaux, 30
 Boulogne, H.-Q. of Army of England, 13, 43-4, 143, 210-1, 244; defence of, 307-8, 356-7
 Boyles, Capt. Charles (*Windsor Castle*), 219 n.
 Brace, Capt. Edw. (*Iris*), 287 n.
 Bremen, British occupation of, 462, 465
 Brereton, Brig.-Gen. Robert, C.-in-C., St. Lucia, 178
 Brest, blockade of, 13, 16, 57, 132-3, 335. *See* Cornwallis, Cotton, and Gardner

Britannia (100), 372, 392, 436
 Brown, Capt. William (*Ajax*), 218-24
Bucentaure (80), 61, 357-9, 427-8, 433, 435, 440
 Buckinghamshire, Robert Hobart, 4th Earl of, 79
 Buller, Capt. Edm. (*Malta*), 219 n.
 Bunbury, Col. Sir Henry, Q.-M.-G., 56, 463
 Burn, Capt. John (*Beagle*), 121-4
 Byng, Adm. John, 83, 389

C

Cabril, Fort (Dominica), 138
 Cadix, blockade of, 19, 33, 44, 45, 54, 68, 256; arsenal, 149. *See also* Orde, Collingwood, Nelson
Cæsar (80), 205, 347 n., 445-8
 Calabria, 7, 8, 10, 463-4, 469
Calcutta (54), capture of, 345-6, 451
 Calder, V.-Ad. Sir Robert, 33, 57, 59, 74, 81, 91-2, 123-6, 128, 161-3, 194, 201-4, 205, 234-7; his cast for *Missiessy*, 134; his action with *Ville-neuve*, 48-9, 214-27; its sequel, 228-30, 239-40; his cast for *Allemand*, 242-3; closes on *Ushant*, 243; detached in search of *Villeneuve*, 274-6, 296-301; blockades him in Cadix, 309; sent home, 366
 Cambacérès, J. J. Régis de, Arch-Chancellor of France, 88, 151
 Camden, Earl, Sec. for War, 54, 170
 Campbell, R.-Ad. Donald, 111, 115-6, 123, 168
 Campbell, Capt. Patrick (*Doria*), 30-1
 Canning, Right Hon. George, 324
Canopus (80), 180, 274, 362
 Cape of Good Hope, as outpost of India, 40, 261-3; captured, 470
 Cape Verde Islands, as intelligence centre, 33
 Capel, Capt. Hon. T. Bladen (*Phæbe*), 103, 195
 Carr, Commander Wm. (*Naiely*), 183, 186
 Carronades, 51-2, 249 n.
 Cartagena, effect of squadron at, 57, 62, 68, 83, 147-8, 163-9, 195, 300, 363-4

- Castlereagh, Rob. Stewart, Viscount, 79, 262, 304, 315, 353, 355, 356, 453, 458, 465
- Cathcart, General Chas. Murray, 2nd Earl of, 459-62, 465-6
- Centaur* (74), 139
- Channel Fleet. *See* Western Squadron
- Channel Islands Cruiser Squadron, 13
- Charles, Archduke, 314, 456, 460-1
- Coalition, the Third, origin of, 6, 8, 18; its progress and intention, 258-60, 314, 455-7, 460. *See also* Appendix A and B.
- Cobenzl, Philip Graf von, 322, 354
- Codrington, Capt. Edw. (*Orion*), 278, 373, 381, 396-8, 422-3
- Cochrane, R.-Ad. Sir Alexander, 19, 33, 82, 85, 125, 146, 154, 171-4, 177, 179, 184, 188-9, 336
- Combined expeditions method of protecting over uncommanded seas, 56-7, 91-3, 98-102, 118-9, 168-9, 194-5, 343-4; strategical use of, 87-90, 141-2, 148, 153, 157, 191-2, 208, 252, 304-5, 314-6, 323-5, 328-9
- Commerce, protection and destruction of, 4, 56, 132, 280, 310, 325, 336-51. *See also* Convoys
- Collingwood, V.-Ad. Cuthbert, 47, 84-6, 122, 125-8, 130-6; off Cadix, 158, 165-9, 194-8, 299-301, 353; at Trafalgar, 386-90, 393-7, 400-39. C.-in-C., Mediterranean, 440-43; his strategy and appreciations, 167-8, 197, 232-3, 365, 368, 374, 380-1, 441-2
- Colossus* (74), 371 n., 396, 430
- Congreve, Col., his rockets, 353, 356
- Conqueror* (74), 180
- Constantinople, 195, 260-1
- Convoys, as strategical factors, 63, 69, 102, 182-3, 309-10; attacks on, 63, 183, 345, 350. *See also* Commerce
- Coote, Gen. Sir Eyre, 87, 159, 197, 261
- Corfu, Russians at, 6, 11, 64, 258, 478; their squadron at, 195
- Cork, H.-Q. Irish station, 87, 294-5, 332, 335-6
- Cornwallis, Charles, 1st Marquis, Gov.-Gen. of India, 89; his instructions, 262-3, 347
- Cornwallis, Ad. William, 13-16, 32-3, 47, 57, 190, 201-4, 255-6, 310, 334-5; his movement to meet Villeneuve, 205-7, 212-3; divides his fleet, 273-88, 308; attacks Ganteaume, 288-9; operations against Allemand, 335-8, 341, 347-8
- Corsica, 151
- Coruña, 236, 243-4
- Cosmao-Kerjulien, Capt. J. M. Baron de, 174, 440
- Cotton, Ad. Sir Charles, 14, 57-9, 277, 320
- Courageux* (74), 347 n., 446
- Courier*, cutter, 322
- Craig, Lieut.-Gen. Sir James, 11, 26-7, 164-5, 170, 233, 258, 260, 457-8, 463-5, 469; his expedition, 54-7, 64, 80-3, 86-7, 91-2, 98-101, 107; at Lisbon, 111-4, 117-8, 129; meets Nelson, 118-9, 122, 152; at Gibraltar, 149, 157, 162-5, 167-9; Spanish fear of, 149, 152; progress of, 196, 303, 314-6, 321, 322, 328, 354, 355-6, 361-5, 367; at Naples, 457, 463-4; at Messina, 465-6; Napoleon on, 149-53, 304
- Cruisers, stripped to man battleships, 85; as battle units, 446-7
- Cruiser-lines, 332-4, 352, 367
- Cruiser Squadrons, 12, 103, 178, 190, 233, 253, 279, 294, 325, 337, 361-2, 365, 367
- Cruiser work, 30-2, 35-6, 61-2, 65-7, 85-6, 99-101, 122-5, 132-4, 183, 230-40, 245-50, 254-5, 276 n., 284-5, 286-8, 291-300, 345-8, 370, 377-8, 443-6
- Cuming, Capt. William (*Prince of Wales*), 219 n.
- Curieux* (18), 179, 186, 200, 203, 234, 241, 253

D

- Dacres, R.-Ad. James Richard, C.-in-C., Jamaica, 33, 82, 85, 173
- Daru, Count, 270
- Decade* (36), 100, 101, 107, 119, 216, 231, 341
- Decrès, V.-Adm., French Minister of Marine, 39, 52, 153, 160, 196, 245

305-6, 325, 361, 421; his warnings to Napoleon, 154-6, 305-6
Defence (74), 199, 256 n., 371 n., 396
Defiance (74), 217-9
Diadem (64), 344 n.
 Diamond Rock (Martinique), 139-40, 174, 176-7, 181, 192
Didon (40), 146, 175; captured, 246-9
Diligent, storeship, 347, 366
Diomède (50), 344 n.
 Discretion of Admirals, 125-8, 134-5, 169, 161-2
 Disguising ships, 248
 Dominica, 88, 137-8, 142, 145, 174
 Don, Maj.-Gen. George, 455, 459-60
Donegal (74), 180, 441
Doris (36), 30-1
 Douglas, R.-Ad. William Henry ("Billy"), 254 n.
Dragon (74), 54, 107, 162, 194, 217-9, 235, 243, 250, 266, 274, 276, 290-1, 338 n.
Dreadnought (98), 47, 49 n., 85, 371, 394, 431, 435
 Drury, R.-Adm., 159, 253, 294, 295 n., 332
Dryad (36), 444
 Duff, Capt. George (*Mars*), 363, 370-2, 374
Duguay-Trouin (Fr. 74), 445-9
 Dumanoir, Le Pelley, R.-Ad., 432-6; his action with Strachan, 443-9
 Dumouriez, General, 28-9, 319
 Dundas, Capt. Thomas (*Naiad*), 287-8, 294 n.
 Dunkirk flotilla depot, 254
 Durham, Capt. Philip C. (*Defiance*), 219 n.
 Duroc, Michel, Grand Master of the Palace, 308
 Dutch West Indies, 19-20

E

Egypt, its defection of British strategy, 37, 56, 59-61, 63-4, 84, 86, 98, 122, 129-30, 144, 146, 175
 Elkins, Sir Charles, 383
 Elba, 28, 480
 Elbe, operations on, 317, 453, 455, 459-62

Elliott, Mr. Hugh, Brit. Minister at Naples, 55, 64, 100, 314, 322, 354, 441, 457, 460-1
 Emms river, operations on. *See* Elbe
 Escafio, Capt. Antonio da, 221 n., 266, 293, 359-60, 384
 Étaples, 13
Euryalus (38), 295-6, 299, 309, 376, 415

F

Feliz (12), 30-1
 Ferdinand IV., King of Naples, 55, 64-5, 457, 466
 Ferrol, blockade of, 13, 16, 34, 38, 43, 45, 59, 91-2, 107, 146, 161, 194, 207, 235, 239, 242; raised, 243, 250; its squadron, 142-3
 Finisterre, rendezvous, 128, 234 n., 273 n., 243, 246, 332-3
Fisgard (38), 81, 108
 Fitzgerald, Lord Robert, Brit. Minister at Lisbon, 110-45, 128
 Fitzroy, Capt. Lord William (*Æolus*), 246-8
 Flotillas, British defence, 12, 254-5; Napoleon's, 12, 17 n., 18, 42; final state of, 211-2, 254; demobilised, 307-9, 324; at Cadix, 357. *See also* Cartagena and Algeiras
 Flying Squadron, 47, 84-7, 123, 124-8, 130-6, 142. *See also* Collingwood.
 Formentara, 99-100
 Fort de France. *See* Martinique
 Fouché, Joseph, Duc d'Otrante, Minister of Police, 151-2
Foudroyant (80), 135 n.
Fouqueux (Fr. 74), 440
 Fox, Charles James, 90, 354-5; in office, 468-9
 Fox, Lt.-Gen. Hon. Edward, C.-in-C., Gibraltar, 168, 353
 "Francis," Mr., 367
 Fremantle, Capt. Thos. Francis (*Neptune*), 425
 Fulton, Robert. *See* "Francis"

G

Gaeta, 469
 Galiano, Brig.-General, 360
 Galita, 66

Galleons, seizure of Spanish, 19
 Gambier, V.-Adm., 78, 94, 204
 Gambier, Mr., Consul at Lisbon, 112, 299
 Ganteaume, V.-Adm. Honoré, Comte, 20, 38, 40, 43-6, 47-8, 50, 54, 57-9, 132, 143, 148, 196, 207; tries to get to sea, 289; appreciation by, 208-9
 Gardner, Adm. Alan, Lord, 59, 70, 84-6, 92-3, 116-7, 125-9, 132-3, 159-61, 190, 332, 337
 Gardner, Capt. Hon. Alan Hyde (*Hero*), 219 n., 221
 Genoa, naval base at, 190
 George III., 79, 355, 467
 Gibraltar, 7, 9, 24, 54, 103, 233
Glory (98), 72 n., 194, 219 n., 338 n.
 Godoy, Manuel, Principe de la Paz, 145, 149
Goliath (74), 199, 256 n., 266, 274, 276
 Gourdon, R.-Adm., 43, 142, 194, 236-7
 Grandallana, General (Adm.), Domingo de, 142, 194
 Graves, R.-Adm. Sir Thomas, 30-1, 58-9, 135, 160-1, 193-4
 Gravina, Lt.-Gen. Frederico, C.-in-C., Cadiz squadron, 68, 75, 185; in Calder's action, 218-25 n., 227-8; at Coruña, 245; at Cadiz, 300, 395-6; at Trafalgar, 399, 409, 432-6; appreciations by, 244, 295, 357-60
 Greece, Turkish Province, 6, 59
 Greig, Commodore (Russian), 463
 Grenville, William, 77
 Grey, Charles, Earl, 468 n.
 Griffith, Capt. Edw. (*Dragon*), 219 n., 291
 Guadeloupe, 138, 185-6

H

Hallowell, Capt. Benjamin (*Tigre*), 99
 Hameln, 308, 453, 459, 462
 Hanover, 12, 23, 303, 308, 453; troops from, 314, 454, 459
 Hargood, Capt. William (*Belleisle*), 115
 Harrowby, Dudley Ryder, 2nd Earl of, Sec. of State, 8, 25, 456, 459-60, 466

Harvey, Capt. John (*Téméraire*), 219 n., 381
 Havana, 187
 Hawes, Commander James (*Aimable*), 346
 Hawke's attack, 414
Hazard (18), 288
Hero (74), 219 n., 221, 347 n., 446-9
Hibernia (120), 52 n.
 Holloway, R.-Adm. John (Nore), 254 n.
 Home defence, 11, 254 n., 265, 292.
See also Flotilla
 Hood, Adm. Samuel, Viscount, 78, 319
 Hood, Commodore Samuel, C.-in-C., Leeward Islands, 33, 172
 Hope, Capt. George (*Defence*), 381
 Howe, Adm. Earl, 77, 214
 Hythe Canal, 11 n.

I

Illustrious (74), 188, 336, 346
Indefatigable (44), 443 n., 446
 India, its influence on the campaign, 6, 40, 87, 89, 129, 310
 Inman, Capt. Henry (*Triumph*), 219 n.
 Intelligence, 59, 62, 80-2, 85, 90-1, 111, 116-7, 121, 151, 194, 197, 216, 235, 252; Napoleon's department for, 268 n., 307
 Invasion, Napoleon's threat of, 2, 12, 14, 17; abandoned, 18, 21; resumed, 22, 28-9, 39-46; again abandoned, 305-8; news thereof in England, 321, 322; legend of, 326.
See also Home Defence
 Ionian Islands. *See* Corfu
 Ireland, as possible objective, 15, 21, 106, 118, 154, 192, 196, 236, 252, 288; signal stations in, 254 n.
Iris (32), 287-8, 289, 294-6, 299
 Irish Squadron, 335-7. *See also* Cork
 Italy, Napoleon's kingdom of, 41, 131, 146, 150-1, 258

J

Jamaica, 33, 82, 124, 172-4, 188
 Jerome Bonaparte, 152

Joseph Bonaparte, 88; King of Naples, 422-3
 Joubert, General, 260, 263
 Junot, General Andoche, at Lisbon, 110-5

K

Keats, Capt. Richard Gardiner (*Superb*), 311, 367, 385
 Keith, Adm. Sir Geo. Keith Elphinstone, K.B., Lord, C.-in-C., North Sea, 12, 213, 253-5, 353, 357 n., 466
 Kempenfelt's system, 214
 Kerr, Capt. Lord Mark (*Fisgard*), 81-2, 105, 122
 Knight, R.-Adm. John, 54, 56-7, 80, 83, 87, 91-2, 107, 112-4, 116, 118-9, 125, 162, 233

L

Lacy (Lasci or Lascy), General, 27, 56, 258, 303, 314, 458, 463-4
 Laforey, Capt. Sir Francis, Bart. (*Spartiate*), 177
 Lagos, 69, 115, 295
 "L'Ami," a spy, 82
 Lauriston, General Alexandre, 37, 39, 285-6, 292-4
 Legge, Capt. Hon. Arthur Kaye (*Repulse*), 219 n.
 Letchmere, Capt. W. (*Thunderer*), 219 n.
 Leveson-Gower, Lord Granville, Ambassador to Russia, 8, 9, 10, 27 n., 129, 258-9, 261 n., 313, 314 n., 315-7
 Levichan (74), 180, 231, 415
 Line of bearing, 410-3
 Linzee, Capt. S. H. (*Warrior*), 219 n.
 Lisbon, as intelligence centre, 33, 106, 109, 117-8, 216, 231, 234, 358; as objective and naval base, 87, 110-3, 129-30, 131
 Lively (38), 116-7
 Liverpool, as intelligence centre, 197
 Lobb, Capt. Wm. Granville (*Pomone*), 334, 352, 366
 Loire (38), 133
 L'Orient, 32, 212

Louis, R.-Adm. Thomas, 274, 362-5, 370-3, 393, 395, 398, 443

M

M'Arthur, Dr. John, 108
 Mack von Leiberich, General Charles, Baron, 316-7, 454-5
 Maddalena (Sardinia), 35, 99
 Madeira, as intelligence centre, 33, 73, 85, 125
Magnanime (74), 193
 Magon de Clos-Doré, Adm. Charles René, 141, 142, 146, 175-6, 177, 360, 368, 371
 Maida, battle of, 469
 Maitland, Capt. Fred. Lewis (*Loire*), 133
Majastueux (120), 335
 Malta, question of, 3-11, 23-7, 54, 129, 259, 313, 476-80, App. A and B
Malta (80, late *Guillaume Tell*), 215, 219 n., 223-5, 235
 Maria Caroline, Queen of Naples, 322, 463, 466
 Maritime Code, question of, 27, 259, 313
 Marittimo, 100
 Marmont, Marshal Viesse de, 20, 157, 191-2, 207, 252, 270, 308. *See also* Texel
Mars (74), 392-4, 396, 415-6, 430
Martin (16), 216
 Martinique, 33, 43-5
 Masséna, Marshal, 456-7, 461
 Maurice, Lieut. James Wilkes (*H.M.S. Diamond Rock*), 139, 174-5, 177, 181
 Mauritius, 38
 Mediterranean, Russian and British interests in, 7, 8, 24-5, 129-30, 277-80
 Mediterranean station, 30, 33, 40, 83, 321
Melampus (36), 74, 81-2, 335, 338, 339 n.
 Melville, Henry Dundas, Viscount, First Lord of Admiralty, 14, 34; his fall, 76-8, 90, 101
 Messina, 10; occupied by Craig, 465-6

Milan, Napoleon crowned at, 150-4
 Milius, Capt. P. Bernard (*Didon*), 246-9
 Minorca, 27
Minotaur (74), 167 n., 433-5
 Missiessy, R.-Adm. E. T. Burgues, Comte de, 20-1, 30-3, 43, 47, 88; his return, 133-4, 140-1, 144, 149, 159, 231; his raid on W. Indies, 137-41, 172-3; retires, 192-3
 Montserrat, 138
 Moore, Lt.-Gen. Sir John, 356
 Moore, Commodore Graham (*Indefatigable*), 19, 123
 Moorsom, Adm. Constantine, 382
 Moorsom, Capt. Robert (*Revenge*), 382
 Morea. *See* Greece
Moucheron (16), 346-8
 Mulgrave, Henry Phipps, Earl of, Sec. of State, 25, 100, 129, 260
 Murat, Joachim, Prince, 151
 Myers, Lt.-Gen. Sir William, 151, 178
 Myers, Major, 178 n.

N

Naiad (38), 241, 287-8, 294, 297
Namur (74), 347 n., 448-9
 Naples, kingdom of, 6-8, 27, 315, 463, 469
 Napoleon, his policy, 1 *et seq.*, 36, 38-43, 54, 64, 110, 267, 322, 468-9; goes to Italy, 80, 142; returns, 204, 207; at Boulogne, 244, 267, 273, 322; abandons the invasion, 306-8; starts for Paris, 325; his Austerlitz campaign, 454, 460-2
 —, his naval strategy, 13, 38-46, 58, 63, 98-109, 137-60, 175, 185, 190-4, 195-7, 207-11, 243-5, 251-2, 268-72, 275, 293, 302-7, 324-9, 338, 357
 —, his views on invasion, 17-8, 21, 88; on battleships, 48-53; on combined expeditions, 87-9, 142, 149-53, 252; his use of them, 157, 191-2, 269-9; estimate of Nelson, 144-6, 196; use of the Press, 152, 160
 —, characteristics as war-director, 59, 88-9, 140, 145-8, 157, 232, 236, 240, 271-2
Narcissus (32), 343 n.

Naval Staff, 94-7, 306
 Navy, inquiry into state of, 76, 77, 90
 Neapolitan Squadron, 104
 Nelson, V.-Adm. Horatio Lord, C.-in-C., Mediterranean, 32; misses Villeneuve, 33-8; chases him, 120, 171, 237; in W. Indies, 177-86; returns, 187, 216-7, 231-3; closes on Channel, 234, 265-7; at home, 309-14; ordered to Cadiz, 321-4; sails, 329, 341; off Cadiz, 352-69; getting contact with Villeneuve, 376-9; at Trafalgar, 399-435, 440
 —, his relations with Orde, 34-5, 68-9, 70-1, 93, 108, 116-7
 —, his strategy and appreciations, 8-11, 19, 28, 36, 59-61, 63-8, 86, 131, 170-2, 186-7, 230, 356-7, 365-6
 —, orders to, 19, 54-5, 57, 81, 83-4, 86, 126, 132, 256, 321, 356, 366
 —, ideas on large ships, 48-51, 364 n., 367 n., 390-3; on tactics, 187, 275-6; on cruisers and signals, 331-4
 —, his tactical memoranda, 171, 214, 366, 378, 380, 381-98, 437-9, and App. D
Neptune (98), 49 n., 415, 425, 428, 434-5
Neptuno (Sp. 80), 433, 435, 441
Nelley (12), 183-4, 186
 Neutrals, interference by, 61, 65, 102, 116-8, 123, 133, 104-5, 231, 238, 239, 246-8, 353, 365, 444
 Nevis, 138
 Newspapers, information from, 151, 154, 234
 Nile, battle of, its influence, 58, 220, 261
Nimble (10), 283, 298
Niobe (38), 247 n., 266
 Nore, The, 12
 Norria, Adm. Sir John, 13
 Northesk, R.-Adm. William Carnegie, Earl of, 393. *See also* *Britannia*
Northumberland (80), 173, 180
 Nourse, Capt. Joseph (*Barbadoes*), 183-4, 186 n.
 Novosilzow, Count, Russian Envoy Extraordinary, 258-9, 473
 Nugent, V.-Adm., 219 n.

O

- Orde, V.-Adm. Sir John, "Coast of Spain" station, 19, 33, 34, 54; his retreat from Cadiz, 68-75; 81, 83, 87, 92, 105, 108, 122-3, 126, 176, 245, 300-1
 Organisation of fleets, 375-6, 392-5.
See also Advanced Squadrons
Orion (74), 371 n., 397, 433 n.
Orpheus (32), 112-4
 Otranto, 7, 64
 Otway, Capt. Wm. Henry, Comr. at Gibraltar, 108

P

- Packets, 111-2, 113, 124, 216, 340 n.
 Paget, Sir Arthur, Amb. at Vienna, 321
 Palermo, 99
 Palmas, Gulf of (Sardinia), 59-63
 Parker, Capt. William (*Amazon*), 100 n., 102, 105, 117, 171, 294-6, 340
 Passaro, Cape, 457
 Pellew, R.-Adm. Sir Edward, C.-in-C., East Indies, 159
 Penmarcks, rendezvous, 298, 335
Phæbe (36), 103, 370
Phoenix (36), 241, 246-9, 291, 299, 444-7
Pickle (10), 297
 Piedmont. *See* Sardinia, Kingdom of
 Pino, General, Fr. War Minister in Italy, 89
 Pitt, John, second Earl of Chatham, 77; First Lord of Admiralty, 78
 Pitt, William, first Earl of Chatham, 1, 54, 304
 Pitt, William, the Younger, 76, 78-80, 129-31, 197, 354-6; his death, 465-7; his policy, App. A and B
 —, as a War Minister, 1 *et seq.*, 18-9, 22-9, 39, 54-6, 68, 89-91, 150, 159, 259-64, 278, 302-4, 313-7, 328-9, 451, 459-60
Pluton (Fr. 74), 174
Polyphemus (64), 72, 256 n., 371 n., 431
 Popham, Commodore Sir Home, 261, 336, 343, 351, 449; his telegraph code adopted, 331-5

- Portugal as a neutral, 110-4
 Potsdam, Treaty of, 455, 458
Poulette, cruiser, 298
 Poynts, Capt. Stephen (*Melampus*), 74
 Prevost, Lt.-Gen. Sir George, 137-8
 Prigny, Capt., Fr. Chief-of-Staff, 360
Prince (98), 372, 394, 415-6
Prince George (98), 93
Prince of Wales (98), 161, 219 n., 225
Princess of Orange (74), 256 n.
Principe de Asturias (112), 265. *See also* Gravina
Principe de la Paz (24), privateer, 340
 Prussia, policy of, 11-2, 23, 28, 143, 303, 308, 454-6, 459-61; deserts the Coalition, 462, 470. *See also* App. A and B
 Pula Roads (Sardinia), 59, 65

Q

- Queen* (98), 54, 107, 162, 167 n., 362
 Quiberon Bay, 30-1

R

- Rainier, R. Adm. Peter, 288, 310, 336, 340-1
Raisonné (64), 135 n., 219 n.
Ramilies (74), 188
Ranger (14), 238
 Ransoms, 137
Rayo (Sp. 100), 441
Redoutable (Fr. 74), 427-8, 440
 Rendezvous, 60 n., 74, 81 n., 99, 234 n.
Renown (74), 63, 69
Repulse (74), 135 n., 219 n., 338 n.
Revenge (74), 412-3, 430, 435
 Reynier, Gen. Jean L. E., Comte, 469
 Rochefort, blockade of, 13, 16, 30, 38, 137, 144; raised, 202-3; squadron of, 144, 147-8, 153-4, 160, 192-3. *See also* Missiessy and Allemand
 Rockets. *See* Congreve
 Rodd, Capt. J. Tremayne (*Indefatigable*), 443 n.
 Rodney, Adm. Sir G. Brydges, 214, 390
 Rooke, Adm. Sir Geo., 83
 Rose, Rt. Hon. George, 324, 355

Roseau (Dominica), 137-8
Rowley, Adm., 93
Royal Sovereign (100), 109, 118, 119 n., 194, 365, 393, 429, 434. *See* Collingwood
Ruby (64), 256 n.
Rügen, island of, 23, 28
Russell, R.-Adm. Thomas Macnamara ("Paddy"), 254 n., 256 n.
Russia, British relations with, 5 *et seq.*, 22 *et seq.*, 41, 54, 129-30, 258-9, 313-7. *See also* Alexander I.

S

St. Christopher's, 138, 182
St. Cyr, General Gouvion, Fr. C.-in-C., Apulia, 64, 321, 328, 456, 461, 466
St. Domingo, 33, 140, 172-3
St. John of Jerusalem, Naval Knights of, 130, 477
St. Lucia, 2, 88, 137, 142-3, 145, 174
St. Vincent, Adm. Sir John Jervis, Earl, 13 n., 468 n.; his school, 214
St. Vincent (W. Indies), 145
Salcedo, R.-Adm. José Justo (C.-in-C., Cartagena), 68, 149, 157, 169
Santa Anna (Sp. 120), 429, 441
Santa Margarita (44), 446-7
Santisima Trinidad (Sp. 120), 421, 426-8, 441
Sardinia, Kingdom of, 8, 10, 37
Sardinia, island of, its naval importance, 9, 10, 59-61, 65-7, 315
Saumarez, R.-Adm. Sir James, 11, 85, 257
Scilly, rendezvous, 133, 266
Scipion (Fr. 74), 447
Scott, Rev. A. T., 50 n.
Senhouse, Adm. Sir Humphrey, at Trafalgar, 363 n., 377 n., 383, 430
Seville, blockade of, 233
Sicily, 7, 8, 315, 468-9; naval importance of, 9, 10, 35-6, 55, 60-1, 66-7
Sidmouth, Lord. *See* Addington
Signals, 133 n., 181, 225, 331-4
Signal stations, Spanish, 216, 363; Irish, 254 n.
Smith, Lt.-Col., 100
Smith, Capt. Sidney, 356, 469
Sophie (18), 70

Sotheron, Capt. Frank (*Excellent*); 322, 463
Spain, attitude of, 18; war with, 19, 42-3, 110
"Spanish Squadron" (Coast of Spain station), 34, 38. *See* Orde
Spartiate (74), 172, 177, 180, 187, 433-5
Spies, 20, 76, 90, 129, 132, 252-3, 295. *See* Intelligence
Stirling, R.-Adm. Charles, 194, 202, 204; joins Calder, 215-6, 237; at Ushant, 265; detached against Allemand, 338-41, 346
Strachan, Capt. Sir Richard, 63, 69-70, 98, 102, 130, 205; operations against Allemand, 347, 366; action with Dumanoir, 443-9
Stralsund, 23, 28, 453-4
Strangford, Lord, *Chargé-d'affaires*, Lisbon, 253, 295
Stuart, Gen. Sir John, 463
Superb (74), 180, 367, 394-5
Sutton, Capt. Samuel (*Amphion*), 73, 111, 116
Sweden, policy of, 12, 23, 131, 317, 453-4
Swiftsure (74), 33, 180

T

Talleyrand-Perigord, Ch. Maurice de, 87-8, 269-72, 461, 468
Tangier, as intelligence centre, 122
Taranto, 7, 8, 64, 146
Termagant (20), 234
Téméraire (98), 49 n., 371 n., 381; 415-6, 425, 427-8, 440
Terrible (74), 205
Tetuan as victualling dépôt, 108, 114; 234, 362
Texel squadron and corps, 12, 20, 147, 157, 191, 252, 277, 305, 353; (*see also* Marmont); blockade of, 256 n.
Three-deckers, tactical value of, 47-54, 119, 131, 132, 161, 184, 266 n., 281 n., 284; Nelson on, 364 n., 367, 373, 390-3
Thunderer (74), 219 n., 224-6, 434-5
Tigre (74), 180

Tobago, 2, 145
 Tolstoi, General, 459
Tonnant (80), 415
 Toro (Sardinia), 65-6
 Torpedoes. *See* Francis
 Toulon Squadron, 43-4. *See* Villeneuve. New one projected, 144-5, 148, 152-3
 Trafalgar, battle of, 400-39; ships at, 392-4, 407, 420 n.
 Tréport, 322
Trident (64), 310
 Trinidad, 145; Nelson at, 181
Triumph (74), 219 n., 338 n.
 Turkey, Russian and British interest in, 6, 10, 11, 24-5, 260-2, 263

U

Unlocated fleets, 68, 75, 120, 144, 149, 158, 170, 184, 188, 264, 280, 283-5, 292-3, 300, 310, 319
 Ushant position, 131, 141, 202, 234. *See* Western Squadron
 Ustica, 67, 98

V

Variation of compass, 370 n.
 Vashon, R.-Adm. James (Leith), 253-4
 Ver Huell, Adm. Graf von Sevenaer, 254-5
Victory (100), 180, 232, 266, 320, 324, 421-2, 430, 434. *See* Nelson
 Vigo, Villeneuve at, 228, 236
Ville de Paris (110), 205. *See* Cornwallis
 Villeneuve, V.-Adm., 20, 21, 26, 33-9; his escape, 59-75, 81, 82-7; false report of his return, 111, 118, 128, 134; in the W. Indies, 173-85; returns, 184-9, 216; new orders for, 207; his action with Calder, 216-30; enters Vigo, 228, 235; at Coruña, 242, 250; puts to sea, 253, 284-92; retreats to Cadiz, 293, 300-1;

ordered to Naples, 328, 357-61; puts to sea, 369; formation of his fleet, 375-6, 399-400, 406-10. *See also* Trafalgar and *Bucentaure*; orders to, ch. ix. *passim*; appreciations by, 176, 184, 244-5

W

Warren, V.-Adm. Sir John Borlase, Amb. to Russia, 7
 Warren, Capt. Samuel (*Glory*), 219 n.
Warrior (74), 135 n., 219 n., 338 n.
Wasp (16), 73, 111
 Wellesley, Sir Arthur (Duke of Wellington), 310, 318, 456, 461 n.
 Weser, operations on. *See* Elbe
 West Indies, defence of, 85, 124-8; as possible objective, 15, 19, 20, 32, 82, 103-9, 145
 Western Squadron, 13-4, 34, 66, 92, 148, 198, 232, 255-7, 273, 335-6. *See* Cornwallis and Gardner
 Whitby, Capt. John (*Ville de Paris*), 274 n.
 Wilberforce, Mr. William, 78
 Wimereux, 13. *See* Flotilla
Windsor Castle (98), 135 n., 219 n., 224-6
 Woodriff, Capt. Daniel (*Calcutta*), 345-7
 Woronzow, Count, Russian Amb. in London, 6, 9, 23, 24, 79, 129-30, 259, 261 n., App. A and B

Y

Yarmouth, 12, 191. *See* Russell
 Yeu, Isle d', 30
 Young, V.-Adm. W., C.-in-C., Plymouth, 205

Z

Zealous (74), 199, 369 n.

